



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

31 MARTIN'S LANE, DORCHESTER-ON-THAMES,

OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SU 5782 9381

On behalf of

Dr Peter Pritchard

DECEMBER 2013

REPORT FOR	Dr Peter Pritchard 31 St Martin's Lane Dorchester-on-Thames Wallingford OX10 7JF
PREPARED BY	Andrej Čelovský with contributions by Jane Timby
EDITED BY	John Moore
ILLUSTRATION BY	Andrej Čelovský
FIELDWORK	15 th November 2013 Andrej Čelovský Simona Denis Wayne Perkins
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ENQUIRES TO	John Moore Heritage Services Hill View Woodperry Road Beckley Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ Tel/Fax 01865 358300 Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological evaluation at 31 Martin's Lane, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire. One machine-dug 19m long trench was excavated across the proposed footprint of new-build. One mid to late 2nd century Roman ditch and three early to mid 20th century features were recorded within the trench. No other archaeological features were identified in trench.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site of the proposed development is located on the northern side of Dorchester-on-Thames, north of Martin's Lane and east of the High Street (NGR SU 5794 9456); it lies at approximately 49m above OD. The underlying geology is First Terrace River Gravels. The development area is approximately 0.11ha in size and is currently in residential use.

1.2 Planning Background

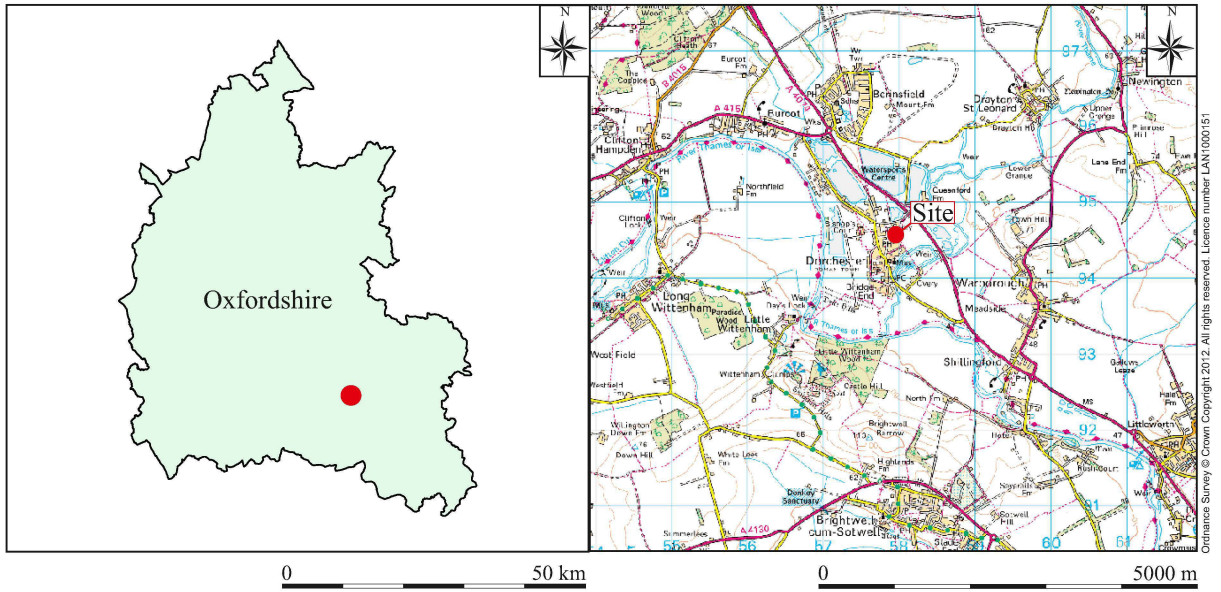
Planning permission is being sought from South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) for the erection of a new detached dwelling with garage on the site (P13/3156/FUL). Due to the potential disturbance of archaeological remains a pre-determination archaeological field evaluation was required as part of the consideration of the application. The Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS), on behalf of SODC, has prepared a Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation (OCAS 2013).

John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS) were commissioned to undertake this work, and a Written Scheme of Investigation (JMHS 2013) was prepared to satisfy the requirements of the Brief. The Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) proposed the methodology by which the archaeological evaluation was to be carried out.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The following section is based on information presented in the WSI (JMHS 2013) and Design Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation (OCAS 2013).

The proposal site lies in an area of some archaeological potential to the north of the Roman small walled town of Dorchester. The proposed development is located approximately 200m north east of the line of the Roman defences and is in an area of extramural settlement to the north of the Roman Town. An archaeological investigation undertaken in the 1980s approximately 20m west of the proposed development recorded a significant amount of Roman deposits dating from the late 1st/early 2nd century through to the 4th century (Historic Environment Record PRN 13969). This included a substantial stone-founded building, yard surfaces and building rubble as well as human remains in the form of a late 4th or 5th century burial. A series of undated enclosures and a trackway have been recorded as cropmarks from aerial photographs immediately north of the application area. These are very likely to



Key Site boundary Evaluation trench Archaeological features
 Footprint of proposed dwelling

Figure 1: Site location

relate to further Roman settlement (PRN D8545). Further cropmarks have also been recorded 60m east of the proposed new dwelling, which show a complex of features consisting of enclosures, field boundaries, ditches, pits, and a road (PRN 8544).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.

And in particular:

- To establish whether there are further remains of the known Roman extramural settlement present and other late burials.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

In accordance with the *Design Brief* issued by OCAS (2013) and WSI by JMHS (2013), JMHS carried out the work, which comprised a scheme for the mechanical excavation of one trial trench across the site. Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the WSI.

3.2 Methodology

A five tonne excavator fitted with a toothless 1.5m wide ditching bucket was used to excavate one trench 19m long in total and 1.5m wide, which was placed across the proposed footprint of new-build. The trench was slightly relocated from the proposed position due to the presence of the driveway, a tree and undergrowth in the area.

Archaeological deposits and features revealed were then cleaned by hand and recorded to an appropriate level. Archaeological features had written, drawn and photographic records made of them, and all deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers.

All relevant artefacts were collected and retained, and analysed by specialists. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (2008) and the principles of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Field Results

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in brackets () show feature fills or deposits of material.

4.2 Trench 1 (Figure 2)

Trench 1 was 19m long in total and 1.50m wide, forming a 'T' shape in plan. The longer part of the trench was 15.50m long and orientated north to south. The shorter part of the trench was 3.50m, aligned east to west.

The lowest deposit was natural soft yellowish light brown sand (1/04) with occasional gravel, 1.24m below modern ground surface. Overlying the deposit (1/04) was 0.40m thick, mid reddish brown silty sand (1/03) subsoil (Section 1.1).

In the north end of the trench, cut through subsoil (1/03) into natural sand (1/04) was a linear ditch 1/08 aligned east to west. It was 1.49m wide, 0.56m deep with a concave north side sloping at c. 45° and flat base. The ditch was filled by a single fill (1/07) 0.56m thick; firm mid grey-brown sandy silt (Section 1.2). From the fill were recovered three mid to late 2nd century Roman pottery sherds and small fragments of animal bone. The south edge of ditch 1/08 was cut by later pit 1/06.



Plate 1: Ditch 1/08 cut by pit 1/06, view east.

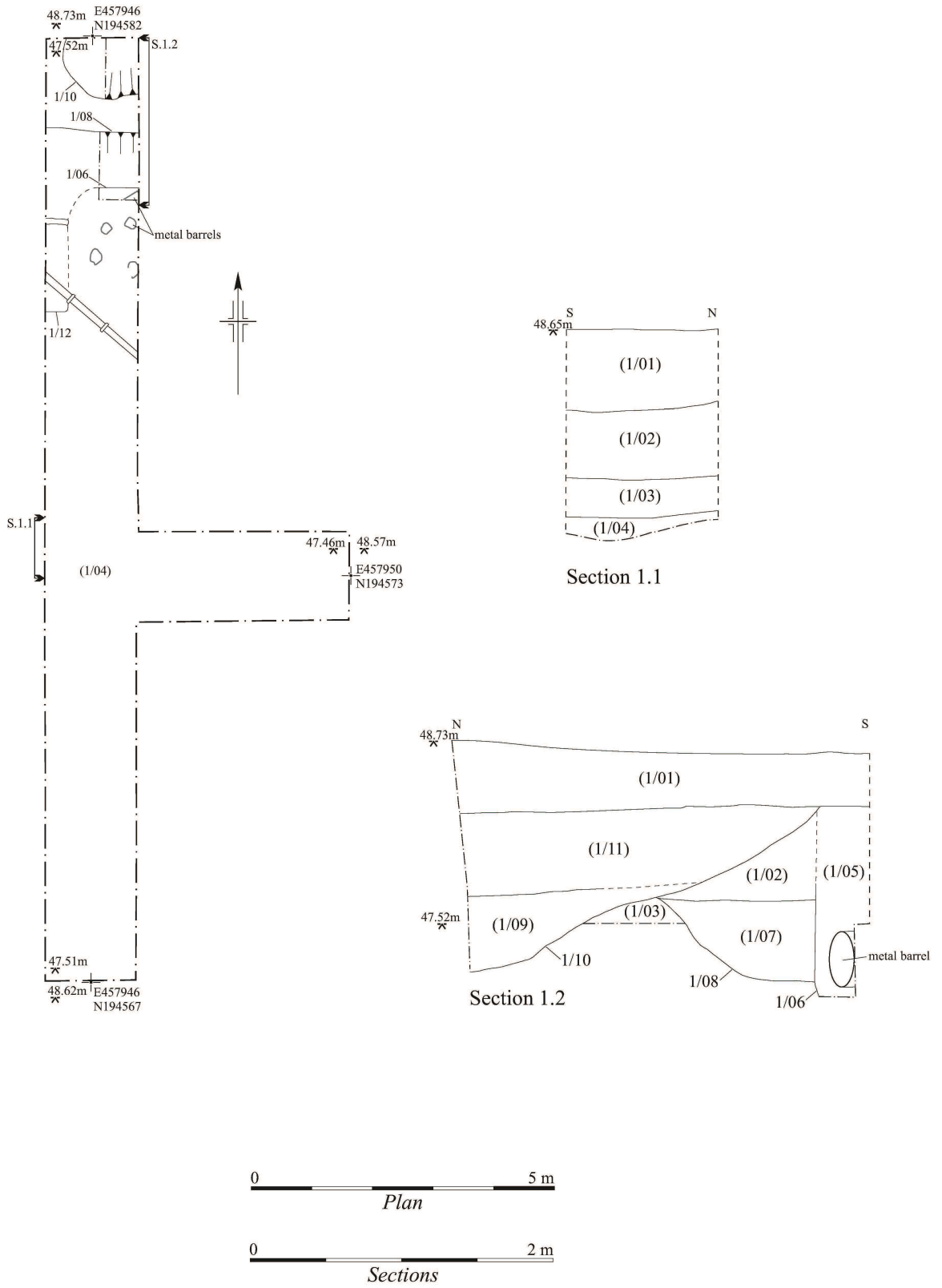


Figure 2: Trench 1 - plan and sections

Overlaying the ditch 1/08 was a 0.40m thick deposit of brownish mid grey sandy loam (1/02), which possibly represents a buried topsoil (Sections 1.2 and 1.1). From the deposit (1/02) were recovered two bricks; one brick was 218mm long, 106mm wide and 48mm, the second brick was 220mm long, 105mm wide and 62mm thick. Both bricks were post-medieval or later in date. A record of the bricks was made on site and they were not retained.

Cut through deposit (1/02) and ditch 1/08 was a large pit 1/06, c. 3m long, 1.10m wide and 1.49m deep (as excavated) with a vertical side (Section 1.2). It was filled by loose mid greyish brown silty sand with occasional gravel (1/05). In the lower part of the fill were buried metal barrels or/and buckets and occasional fragments of brick and tile. Pit 1/06 seems to represent a 20th century rubbish pit. The southern end of the pit was cut by a ceramic pipe which runs to soakaway 1/12.

Cut through the west end of pit 1/06, soakaway 1/12 was c.0.76m deep, 1.40m long and 0.38m wide (as excavated). It was filled with rubble (1/13) containing 20th century machine-made brick, and fragments of roof tiles mixed with mid greyish brown silty sand.

In the north end of the trench was a larger sub-circular pit 1/10, 2.36m long and 1.26m wide and 1.04m deep (Section 1.2). It cut the north edge of pit 1/06, through deposits (1/02) and (1/03) down to the natural sand (1/04). It was filled by two successive fills; lower fill (1/09) compact mid brown sandy silt with 2% gravel and 1% charcoal containing residual late 4th century Roman pottery sherds, one fragment of possible Roman ceramic building material (CBM) and a disturbed modern dog burial. The upper fill (1/11) was soft mid greyish brown sandy loam, which also contained residual late 4th century Roman sherds, one post-medieval pottery sherd, CBM and fragments of animal bone.

The entire trench was sealed by 0.50m thick, loose dark grey sandy loam (1/01), which represented modern garden soil.

4.3 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability of results is considered to be good. The archaeological evaluation took place in generally clement conditions with average light and visibility.

5 FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMAINS

5.1 Pottery by Jane Timby

Introduction and methodology

The archaeological work resulted in a small assemblage of nine sherds of pottery, weighing 88 g, accompanied by two flakes (3 g) of ceramic building material (CBM).

Most of the pottery dates to the Roman period with a single sherd of post-medieval date also present. The pottery was recovered from two features: a pit and a ditch.

In general terms the sherds are quite fragmented with an average sherd size of 9.8 g. Surface preservation is good.

For the purposes of this assessment the material was scanned macroscopically and sorted into fabrics based on firing colour and inclusions (type, size and frequency) in the clay. Known named traded Roman wares were coded using the National Roman fabric reference collection codes (codes in brackets) (Tomber and Dore 1998). Freshly broken sherds were counted as single pieces. Table 1 summarises the data for each context with a provisional spot date.

Description of features

Ditch 1/08 produced just three sherds: a flat-rim bowl or dish in Dorset black burnished ware (DOR BB1); a bodysherd of Oxfordshire grog-tempered storage jar (OXGR) and a small piece of grey sandy ware (OXF RE). This provisionally suggests a date of abandonment in the mid-late 2nd century.

Pit 1/10 produced eight sherds; two Oxfordshire colour-coated wares (OXF RS) including a bowl Young (1977) type C55; two sherds of grey ware; one late Roman shelly ware and one post-medieval/modern red earthenware. Two flakes of ceramic building material were also recovered.

The residual Roman sherds indicate late 4th century activity on the site.

Cxt	Cut	Type	Fabric	Form	No	Wt	Date
1/07	1/08	ditch	DORBB1	flat rim bowl	1	18	C2
1/07	1/08	ditch	OXGR	storage jar	1	16	C2-C3
1/07	1/08	ditch	OXFRE		1	2	C2+
1/11	1/10	pit	OXFRE		2	23	Roman
1/11	1/10	pit	OXFRS	Young C55	1	18	240-400
1/11	1/10	pit	PMREW		1	7	Pmed
1/09	1/10	pit	CBM		2	3	?Roman
1/09	1/10	pit	ROBSH		1	3	370-400+
1/09	1/10	pit	OXFRS		1	1	240-400
Total					11	91	

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

Potential and further work

The Roman assemblage broadly conforms to that to be expected based on assemblages recovered from other archaeological work in Dorchester. This is a very small group which probably contributes little new information and at this point no further work is recommended.

5.2 Palaeo-environmental Remains

No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental analysis were identified, and no samples were taken.

6 DISCUSSION

Archaeological evaluation was successful and meets the aims, which were set in the WSI.

The evaluation revealed four features; one ditch, two pits and soakaway. The abandonment of the east-west ditch 1/08 is dated to the mid-late 2nd century. A further phase of activity in the 4th century is indicated by residual sherds of pottery in 20th century features.

The ditch seems to be a continuation of one of the linear cropmarks, recorded c. 60m east of the proposed new-build. Those cropmarks are part of complex of features consisting of enclosures, field boundaries, ditches, pits, and a road (PRN 8544).

The rest of the features, rubbish pits (1/06) and (1/10), and soakaway 1/12 were associated with 20th century activities within area.

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Appendix 1: Trench Context Inventory

ID	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Finds	Interpretation	Date
Trench 1								
1/01	Deposit	Loose dark grey sandy loam	0.50m (max.)	1.50m	19m	-	Garden soil	Modern
1/02	Deposit	Soft brownish mid grey sandy loam	0.40m	1.50m	19m	CBM	Buried topsoil	Post-roman (?)
1/03	Deposit	Soft mid reddish brown silty sand with occasional small stones	0.40m	1.50m	19m	-	Subsoil	-
1/04	Deposit	Soft light yellowish sand with occasional gravel	0.10m (as exca)	1.50m	19m	-	Natural	-
1/05	Fill	Loose mid greyish brown silty sand with occasional gravel	1.24m (as exca)	1.10m (as exca)	c. 3m	Metal barrels and/or buckets	Fill of rubbish pit	Early 20 th century
1/06	Cut	Sub-circular or sub-rectangular cut with vertical sides	1.24m (as exca)	1.10m (as exca)	c. 3m	-	Rubbish pit	Early 20 th century
1/07	Fill	Firm mid grey-brown sandy silt	0.56m	1.04m (in sec.)	1.50m (as exca)	Pottery sherds and animal bone	Fill of ditch 1/08	Mid to late 2 nd century
1/08	Cut	Linear cut with concave sides c. 45° and concave base, orientated E-W	0.56m	1.49m (max.)	1.50m (as exca)	-	Boundary ditch	Mid to late 2 nd century
1/09	Fill	Compact mid brown sandy silt with 2% gravel and 1% charcoal	0.49m	1m (as exca)	1.26m	Pottery sherds, CBM, animal bones	Lower fill of pit 1/10	Mid 20 th century
1/10	Cut	Sub-circular cut with concave c. 45° side and flattened base	1.04m	2.36m (in sec.)	n/a	-	Large pit with dog burial	Mid 20 th century
1/11	Fill	Soft mid greyish brown sandy loam	0.59m	2.36m (in sec.)	n/a	Pottery sherds, CBM, animal bones	Upper fill of pit 1/10	Mid 20 th century
1/12	Cut	Rectangular cut with vertical sides	c. 0.76m (as exca)	0.38m (as exca)	1.40m	-	Rubble soakaway	Early to mid 20 th century
1/13	Fill	Loose mid greyish brown silty sand	c. 0.76m (as exca)	0.38m (as exca)	1.40m	CBM	Fill of sakaway 1/12	Early to mid 20 th century