



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
SANDFIELDS FARMS LIMITED,
WYRE PIDDLE BYPASS, UPPER MOOR, PERSHORE,
WORCESTERSHIRE**

NGR SO 97657 48017

APRIL 2013

WSM48206

REPORT FOR Sandfields Farms Ltd
Woodwards Way
Upper Moor
Persnore
Worcestershire
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services undertook a watching brief during the excavation of a deep trench for a septic tank at Sandfields Farms Limited, Upper Moor, Pershore, Worcestershire. No archaeological finds or features were found.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (*Figure 1*)

The site is located at Sandfields Farm, Wyre Piddle Bypass, Upper Moor, Pershore (NGR SO 97657 48017).

1.2 Planning Background

A planning application has been submitted to and approved by Wychavon District Council by Sandfields Farms Ltd (agent – Stansgate Planning LLP). The application proposed the siting of 35 caravans for seasonal works accommodation, including winter storage, erection of recreation room and associated developments (W/12/2082).

The approved development may affect a site of archaeological potential, registered on the County Historic Environment Record. It is believed, on current evidence, that sufficient information on the significance of the asset has been provided and that no pre-determination assessment was required, and that the impact of the proposed development on the historic environment can be appropriately offset by a conditional programme of archaeological work (W/12/2082 - condition 9).

This is in line with NPPF and Local Plan policies. The Planning Advisory Section of the Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service has prepared a Brief (Glyde 2013) for such archaeological work.

1.3 Archaeological Background *By David Gilbert*

The actual site has been the subject of a geophysical survey and field-walking exercise as well as metal-detecting, while the land immediately to the south was the subject of trial trenching (Masefield & Glover 2002). The field-walking identified a thin scatter of prehistoric flint, a low density of Roman pottery and higher quantities of post-medieval wares. During the trial trenching a number linear features identified by the geophysical survey were identified as being indicative of Roman and late Roman settlement. These features were sealed by modern plough-soil and a buried post medieval plough-soil. All features demonstrated later truncation. No post-holes or beam-slots were observed and no occupation surfaces survived truncation. Within the fills of a number of the ditches, substantial pieces of masonry were found. This is strongly suggestive of a stone building in the near locality (WSM31639). The area of this development appears to have been covered with ridge and furrow, although there were traces of linear features to the west

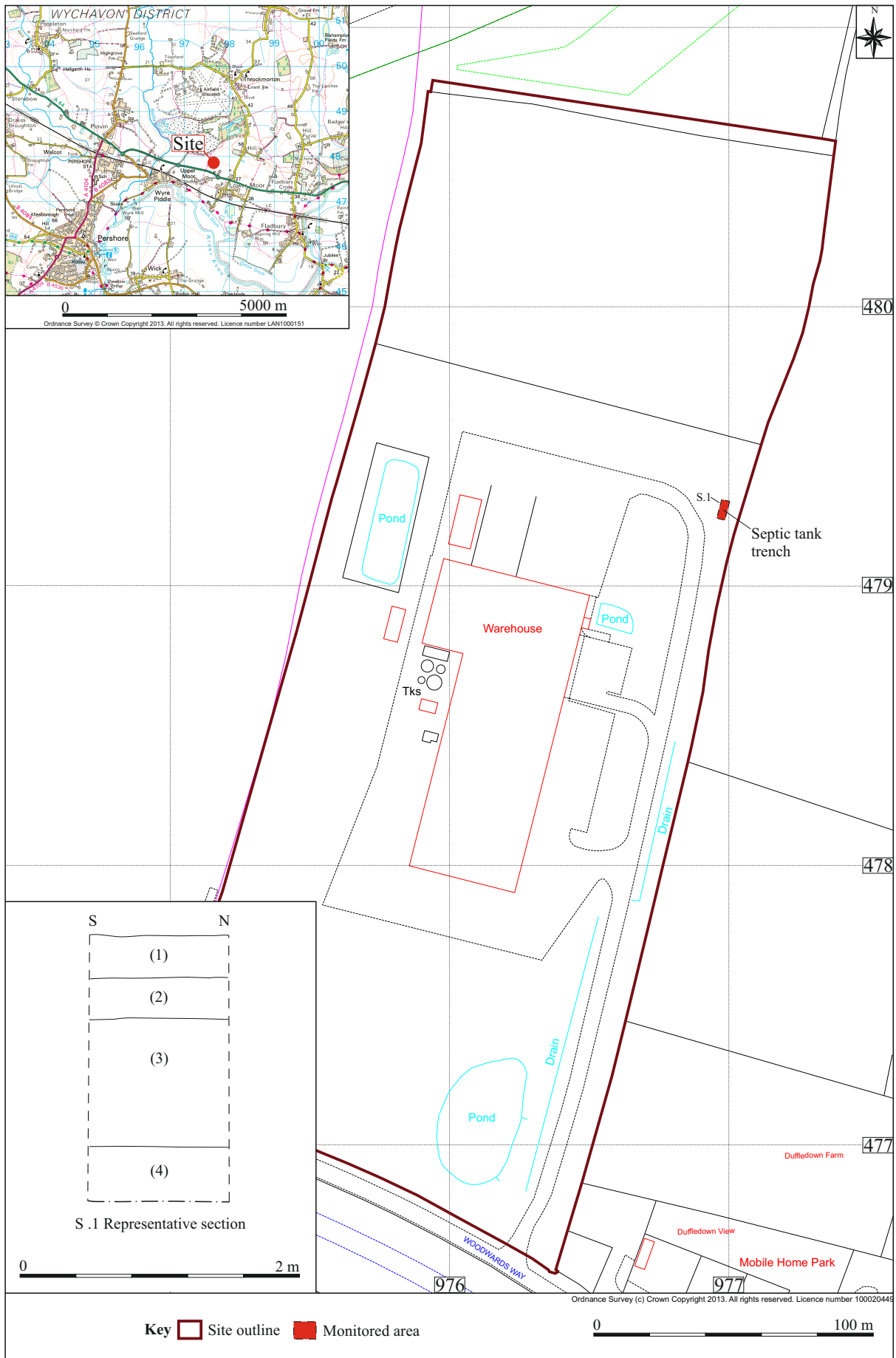


Figure 1. Site location

indicated by the geophysical survey, however the two trial trenches placed in the area failed to record any archaeological features.

A further programme of work (WSM32078) on the land just to the south of the site has provided important evidence of a late Roman settlement within an existing later prehistoric and Roman landscape. The earliest activity was the establishment of a track and field system in the early Roman period. At this time it appears that settlement areas lay to both the west and east of the site, dating evidence suggesting occupation of these during the 1st through to the early 3rd centuries. Although evidence for these settlement areas is restricted to surface finds and those deposited in the surrounding field systems, both appear to have fallen into decline or even have been abandoned towards the end of the 3rd century or early in the 4th century. At this time a new settlement focus was established in the area of the present site. This was probably constructed within an existing agricultural enclosure and comprised a single round house, with defined zones of activity adjacent. The main enclosure was subdivided with a small burial area to the south-east, while cess waste was deposited within the ditch to the north-west. Burnt, possibly human, bone fragments were also recovered from the south-west corner of the main enclosure. Substantial quantities of occupation waste were recovered from the ditch defining this enclosure, and especially from its southern boundary. These indicated a domestic function for the enclosure and associated roundhouse. Several further enclosures were attached to the main settlement area, of probable agricultural function. Dating indicated that occupation of this area extended into the late 4th to early 5th century AD, an unusually late date for Roman activity within the county. The two inhumation burials, aligned north-south, were tentatively identified as a middle aged female, and a younger adult male. Although heavily truncated by ploughing, she was found to have been wearing hobnail boots and a necklace of glass beads, while he had iron pins or brooches at either shoulder, possibly fastenings for a cloak or shroud. A large number of metal artefacts and coins were also recorded, particularly from within the main enclosure ditch. This high quantity of artefacts was unusual for a rural site in this region, possibly indicating the site to have been of local importance, although it may simply be a reflection of the fact that few similar sites have been so comprehensively metal-detected previously. The environmental remains indicated a primarily pastoral economy with the animal bone assemblage indicating that cattle ranching was important, with dogs used for herding. Horses were also a notable presence, while venison and chicken were eaten in addition to cattle, sheep and pig. There was some evidence for the working of red deer antler, which indicates the proximity of extensive woodland. Low levels of crop waste suggested that cereals were imported from outside the settlement, although querns provided evidence for small-scale domestic processing. The molluscan assemblage highlighted a landscape of open grassland, much of it short-turfed, probably grazed, while the presence of hosts of liver fluke parasites provided further evidence for livestock (Vaughan et al. 2005).

This settlement may extend to the south Taylor (2002) located further linear anomalies during a geophysical survey 500m away from the site (WSM33912), although an evaluation conducted close by in 2010 (Cook) failed to locate any archaeological features (WSM42114).

The line of the Wyre Piddle Bypass lies 400m to the south of the site. Prior to its construction the proposed corridor was field-walked (Cook & Ratkai 1995) in various areas (WSM22089, WSM22093, (WSM22094, WSM22095, WSM22096, WSM22099) however very few artefacts were recovered. Areas were also surveyed with geophysical techniques (WSM30177) although few anomalies were located. Evaluation trenching (WSM22308) on the line of the bypass, to the south and east of the site located Neolithic flint and Bronze Age features with associated pottery. However, the main concentration of ditches and other features were dated to the Iron Age. The structural evidence points to a defended settlement at this date, probably with associated agricultural enclosures. Two Roman burials were also encountered (Napthan et al. 1997)

Further field-walking was undertaken in 2001 on land just to the west of the site (WSM30863) covering over 49,000 square metres. Pottery recovered ranged from Roman through to post-medieval, but apparently in two distinct scatters, one speculated to be associated with industrial activity (Darch & Jackson 2003). Further field-walking (WSM33386) 500m to the west of the site also picked up Romano-British sherds (Crawford 2005). Local metal-detectorists have also located some unidentified finds, thought to be Roman to 15th Century in date, from an area to the west of the site (WSM30318).

Excavations to the southwest of the site in 2001 at Fruzen Farm (WSM30575) and 200m to the southeast at George Lane (WSM30576) by WHEAS apparently located extensive prehistoric and Roman remains, unfortunately no report of these findings has yet been published. A watching brief on the Hill and Moor Pipeline in 2002 (WSM31595, WSM31596, WSM31597, WSM31598) 100m to the west located a Roman broach, architectural fragments, a ditch and pottery as well as evidence of later ridge and furrow (Goat & Darch 2002). A watching brief was undertaken 250m to the southeast on the line of the Bypass in 2006 by WCCAS, no report has yet been published (WSM31616). A Neolithic polished axe (WSM22089) was recovered 500m to the south-east.

Field-walking and trial trenching was undertaken 500m to the north of the site (WSM23798) small quantities of Roman and medieval pottery were recovered (Napthan et al. 1996)

The medieval track (WSM30352) from Upper Moor to Throckmorton Court runs past the western boundary of the site. Extensive areas of medieval ridge and furrow are seen to the north of the site (WSM20027, WSM20034, WSM20035, WSM20036, WSM20037, WSM20038 and WSM20040). Traces are also recorded to the south of the site (WSM42288). A Saxon road (WSM30402) lies 500m to the south.

The first edition 1:2,500 OS map (1885) shows the site is within a field containing what appears to be an avenue of trees. The second edition 1:2,500 OS map (1904) has this area marked as allotments. By the time the third edition is published (1927) the entire area is marked with trees presumably as an orchard.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

- The site specific aims are to:
 - Establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains
 - Determine the extent, condition, nature, character, date and significance of any archaeological remains encountered.
 - To establish the nature of the activity on the site
 - To identify any artefacts relating to the occupation or use of the site
 - To provide information on any archaeological remains encountered
 - to record any evidence of activity relating to Roman activity.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the Planning Advisory Section of the Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service. 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

All groundwork was monitored within the area of the septic tank trench. The trench was excavated using a Hitachi Zaxis 130 LCN mechanical excavator with a toothless 0.6m ditching bucket. No other groundworks were monitored as they were either within the topsoil horizon or within recent made ground.

4 RESULTS

All features were assigned individual context numbers. This number covered the deposits, and the cut and fill of features. Context numbers in [] indicate features i.e. cuts; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material. A general description of the layers is given.

The excavated trench for the septic tank (Figure 1; Plate 1) was 7 metres by 3 metres and went down to a depth well in excess of 2 metres and over a metre into the natural

clay. The natural, context 4, was a dark blue grey clay which was approximately 1.5 metres from the surface and overlying this was a natural layer of light grey clay with faint yellow mottling, context 3 (Figure 1; Plate 2) 900mm thick. Context 3 was below 2 a 300mm thick subsoil layer of mid yellow brown sandy clay loam containing a very small amount of rounded small rounded boulders. The uppermost layer was topsoil context 1 a dark brown, firm silty clay loam. No layers contained any finds or features.

The area around the car parks and site of the caravans was on previously made up ground.

The perimeter area of tree planting was on and into made up ground and modern landscaping which was up to metre in depth in places and would not be impacted upon by planting.



Plate 1: Sceptic tank trench



Plate 2: Section S.1 example section

5 FINDS

There were no finds recovered during this watching brief.

6 DISCUSSION

Despite the potential for archaeology in the area the excavation of the sceptic tank trench only revealed clay loam soils down onto natural clay. This was also the case in the

sections of a partially backfilled pipe trench within the subsoil that had been previously excavated next to the area of septic tank trench.

Areas within the car park and around the perimeter of the site showed obvious signs of made-up ground and landscaping and it was considered that tree planting around the site would not impact upon any layers below these layers.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site records

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to Worcestershire County Museum Service.

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