

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

NORTHFIELD FARM, LONG WITTENHAM,

OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SU 5584 9512

On behalf of

Ms K Van Dessel

MAY 2014

REPORT FOR Ms K Van Dessel
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of foundation trenches for outbuilding at Northfield Farm, Long Wittenham, Oxfordshire. Seven foundation trenches, which formed the footprint of the new buildings, were excavated in total length 38.3m, of average width 0.6m and of a maximum depth 1.3m from present ground level. Four successive deposits and two large pits backfilled with late 20th century material were recorded during the fieldwork. No other features of archaeological significance were revealed during the course of ground works.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site of the development has been located on the western side of Northfield Farm and north east of Long Wittenham (NGR SU 55849512). The site lies at approximately 47m above OD and the underlying geology is River Terrace Deposits. The site is currently part of the farmyard.

1.2 Planning Background

South Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for the construction of a replacement oak framed storage/stable building (P14/S0039/FUL). Due to the potential for the work to disturb archaeological deposits an archaeological watching brief was required as a condition during the groundwork. This was in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) prepared a Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief (OHaNET 2014).

John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS) were commissioned to undertake this work, and a Written Scheme of Investigation (JMHS 2014) was prepared to satisfy the requirements of the Brief. The Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) proposed the methodology by which the archaeological watching brief was to be carried out.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The following section is based on information presented in the WSI (JMHS 2014) and Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief (OHaNET 2014).

The site lies adjacent to the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Northfield Farm settlement site (SAM OX 180). The area of the farm, including the application site, is excluded from the scheduled area but the proposed site is immediately adjacent to the monument to the west and 100m from another part of scheduled area to the west.

The scheduled monument consists of a dense range of features, mostly identified through cropmarks, including Bronze Age barrows and enclosures, Iron Age pit clusters and hut circles and Late Iron Age and Roman trackways and field systems. Burials dated to the Bronze Age through to the 3rd century have also been recorded.

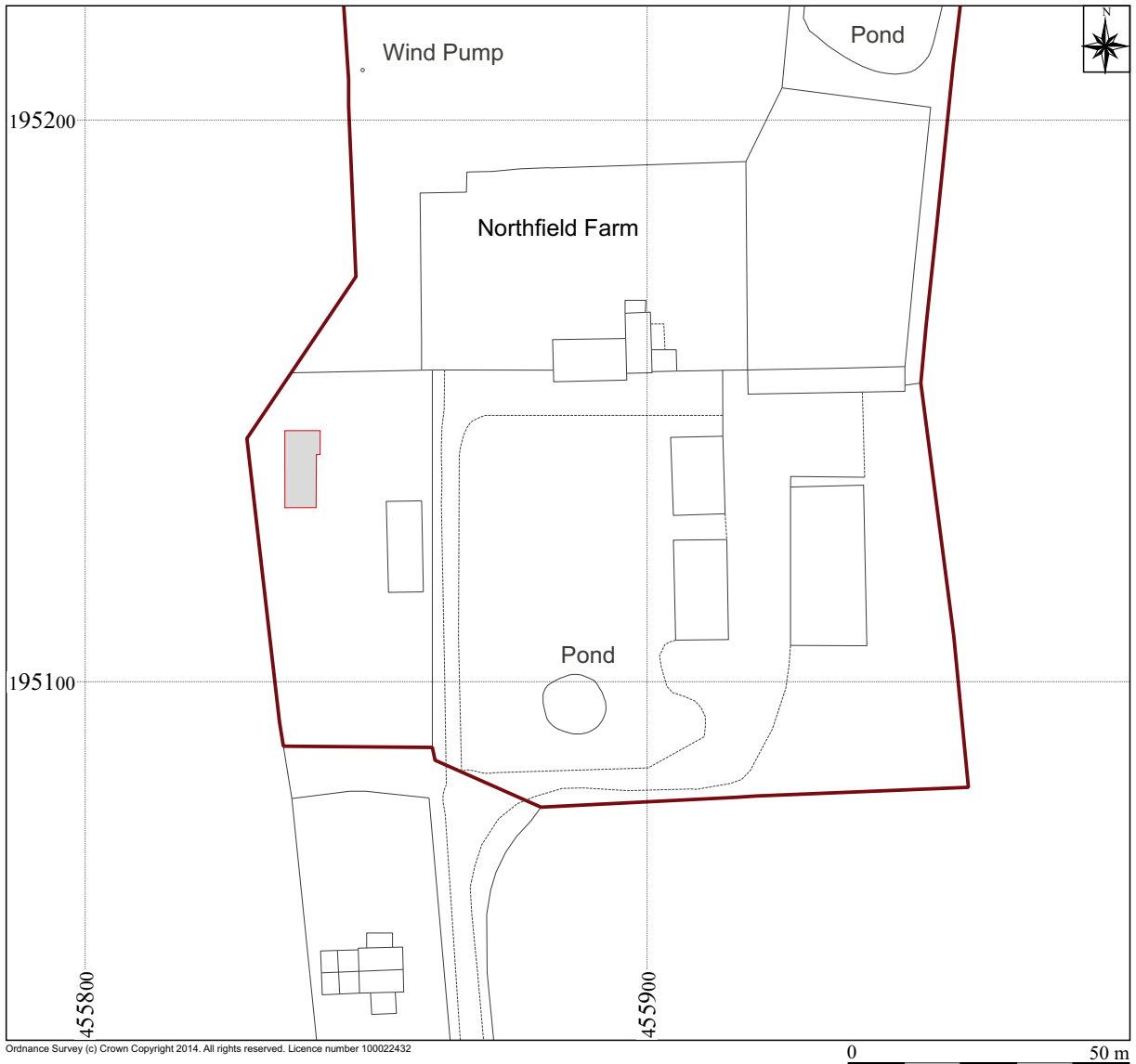
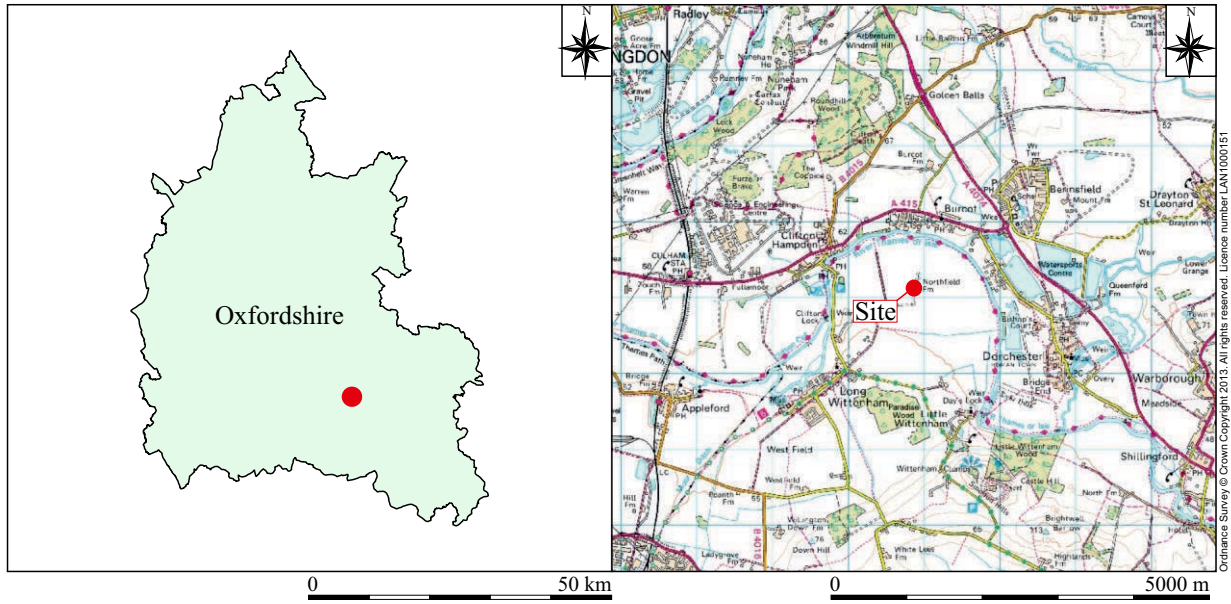


Figure 1: Site location

A long north south track way can clearly be seen on the aerial photographs and this passes immediately to the east of the proposed site.

A number of archaeological investigations have been carried out within and around the monument including field-walking of a field to the west of the site which recovered worked flint and pottery dating from the later prehistoric period through to medieval as well as Roman building material. Geophysical surveys on the site has confirmed the cropmarks evidence and also highlighted that more features exists than are visible on the aerial photographs.

Further research on the landscape of the area through field-walking and geophysical survey has indicated that features are likely to survive outside of the scheduled area. It is possible therefore that features related to these periods could be disturbed during this development.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation 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.

And in particular:

- To record any evidence relating to the known archaeological landscape that the site is within.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the WSI (JMHS 2014). The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (2008).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of groundwork associated with the development of framed storage/stable building. All ground reduction was achieved using a 360° 1.5 tonne tracked excavator fitted with a 0.6m wide trenching bucket and limited hand excavation.

Fieldwork was carried out to a WSI and standard 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.

4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

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.

4.1 Field Results

Seven foundation trenches (FT.1 – 7), which formed the footprint of the new storage/stable building were excavated to a total length 38.3m, of average width 0.6m and of maximum depth 1.3m from the present ground surface (Fig.2a).

The lowest deposit noted within foundation trenches was loose light yellowish brown natural sand (103), occasionally seen in areas, which were excavated deeper than 1m below present day surface. Overlying this deposit (103) was 0.73m thick greyish mid brown sandy silt (102) with lenses of fine gravel (c.35%), which represents an upper natural alluvial deposit (Fig.2b,c)

Cut into the deposit (102) were two 20th century rubbish pits 104 and 106. Cut 104 located in the east part of monitored area (FT. 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7) was 9.9m long, 1.7m wide and 0.72m deep. Based on evidence, seems that this feature represent large irregular/sub-oval pit (Fig.2a). It was backfilled by dark brown sandy silt (105) contains frequent late 20th century rubbish (see 5.1) (Fig.2e,f).

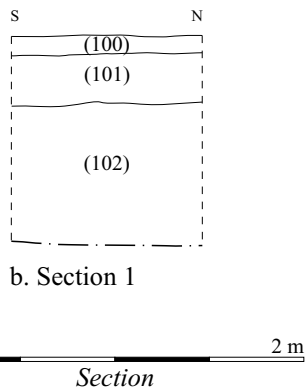
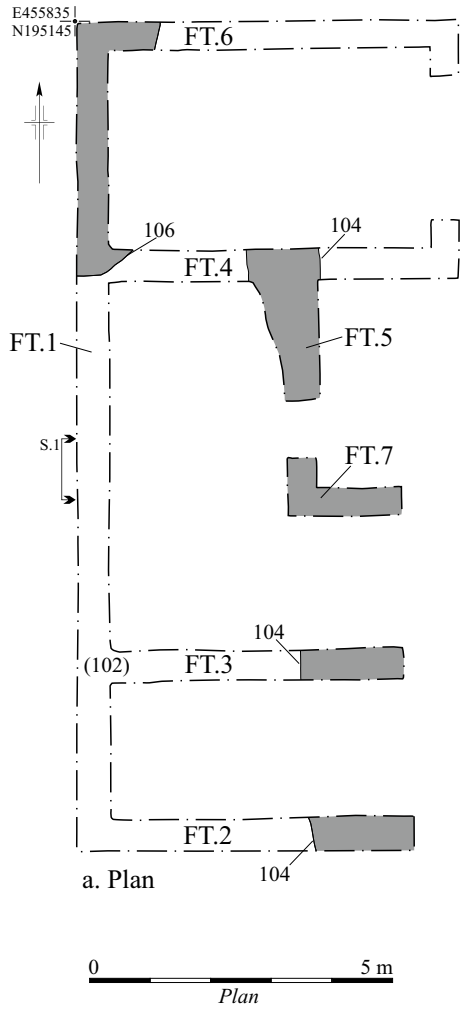
Pit 106 was located at the northwest corner of monitored area (FT 1 and 6). It was sub-circular in plan (4.18x1.38m) with steep sides 0.76m deep (Fig.2a,c). The fill of this pit (107) was formed of mid brown sandy silt with c.35% fine gravel. On the bottom of the pit 106 were buried larger fragments of iron sheet.

Sealing these pits was a reddish mid brown loamy sand (101) with c.50% fine gravel (Fig.2b). At the south end of FT.1 large sandstone were recovered from deposit (101) which might represent building rubble from some outbuilding, that stand within farmyard. This deposit represents late 20th century levelling layer.

The uppermost deposit was 0.10m thick, loose dark grey sandy loam (100), which represented modern topsoil (Fig.2b,c,d,f). At the west edge of monitored area was topsoil mixed with dumped gravel, ash and small fragments of CBM, which formed gentle ridge next to the site boundary.

4.2 Reliability of Results

The reliability of the results is considered to be very good. The archaeological watching brief took place in clement, dry conditions with very good light and visibility. Excellent cooperation from the ground workers ensured that sufficient time was allowed to investigate and record the archaeological deposit to the appropriate standards.



c. Section 1, view west.



d. Pit 106 in FT.6, view north.



e. Pit 104 in FT.5, view south.



f. Pit 104 in FT.7, view north.

Figure 2: Plan and sections

5 FINDS

5.1 General finds

Finds recovered from the pit 104 represents late 20th century building rubbish; timber, fragments of machine made bricks, occasional roughly worked building stones, corrugated iron sheets, door hinges, fibreglass insulation, PVC cable trunking, synthetic rope, plastic lids and bags, fragments of red and white barrier tape, wine bottles and table glass, mainly associated with uncertain building reconstruction or demolition.

In the pit 106 were buried large fragments of iron sheet, which seems to be of same origins as finds from pit 104.

None of these finds were retained.

5.2 Environmental Remains

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

6 DISCUSSION

The archaeological watching brief at Northfield Farm, Long Wittenham, was successful in proving that no archaeological features of significance were recorded within monitored area.

The two large pits 104 and 106 are relatively recent containing 20th century building rubbish. Slightly later the entire area was levelled. The gentle ridge, along the west site boundary, formed of gravel, small fragments of CBM and ash, suggest that area was used as deposal place for building material until recently.

Although, the archaeological watching brief did not revealed any features or finds related to prehistoric and/or Roman period, which might be destroyed by later activity, and the possible presence of archaeological features relating to these periods within the area cannot be excluded.

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

Physical record

None of finds were retained

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

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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