

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT THE OLD RECTORY, ASTON STREET,
ASTON TIRROLD, OXFORDSHIRE**

SU 55600 86000

On behalf of

Tim Lake

April 2014

REPORT FOR	Tim Lake The Old Rectory Aston Street Aston Tirrold Didcot Oxfordshire OX11 9DJ
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted a watching brief during the ground reduction and excavation of foundation trenches within the footprint of a new building in the grounds of The Old Rectory, Aston Tirrold. The excavations required the removal of an existing building and part of a boundary wall between the land of the Old Rectory and a footpath which runs west from the south west corner of the church yard of The Church of St Michael. During the excavations the cut and backfill to a robbed wall was identified extending for approximately 4.5m from the south of this new build area to the edge of the concrete foundation to the boundary wall on the north boundary of the site. The fragmentary remains of a brick wall were identified extending on an east west alignment from the approximate southern extent of the robbed wall cut. The excavations also recovered a number of red flowerpot fragments and three fragments of post-medieval pottery from the topsoil; these were not retained.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located off Aston Street, adjacent to Rectory Lane and immediately southwest of the Church Yard of St Michael's (SU 55600 86000). The underlying geology is West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation.

1.2 Planning Background

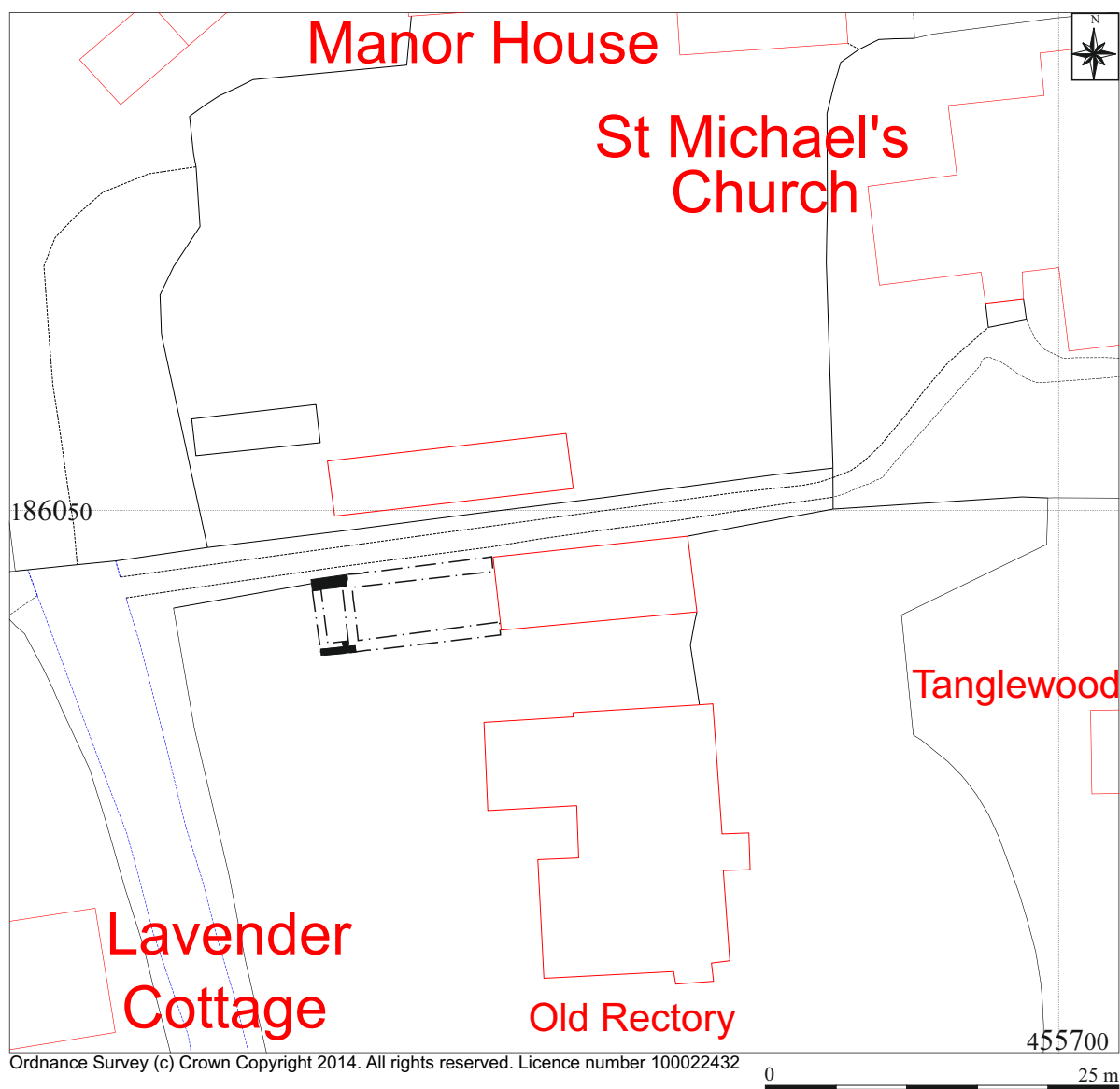
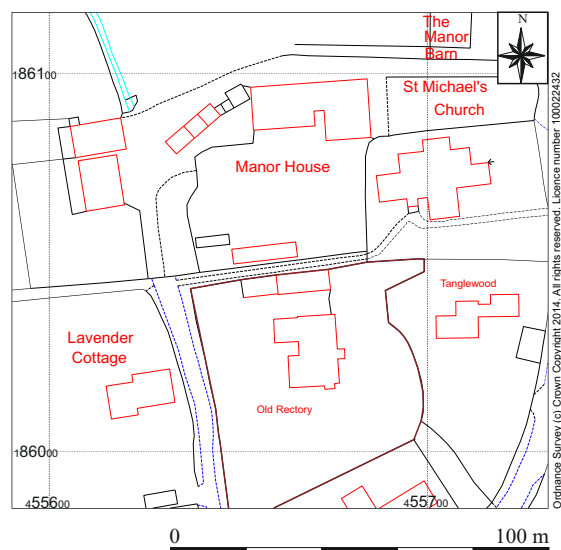
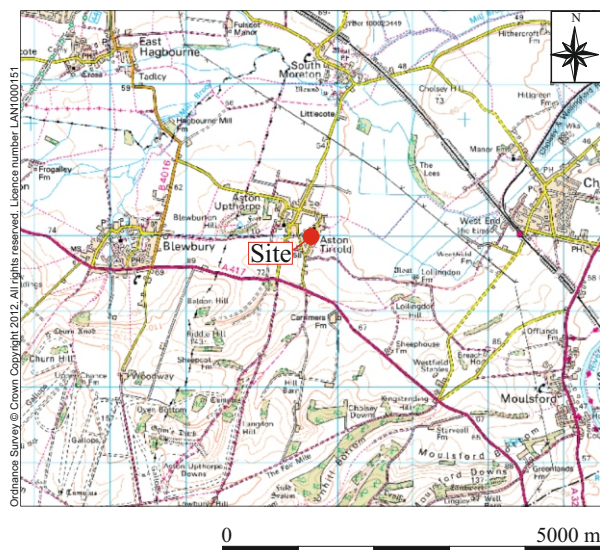
South Oxfordshire District Council has granted planning permission under P01/W0959 for construction of swimming pool, reconstruction of cartshed to become family room, construction of new detached two space barn garage and garage store, construction of length of new brick wall to close gap between end of existing wall and gate pier. Due to the potential of the site to contain buried archaeological remains Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) has recommended, in line with Policy Con 17 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan, that a condition relating to an archaeological watching brief be attached.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The area of the proposed development is located within an area with archaeological potential. The site location is approximately 25m from the south west corner of the church yard to the Church of England Parish Church of St Michael. The location would have been at the centre of the medieval village

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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






Key  Site outline  Excavation trenches  Archaeological features

Figure 1. Site location

- In particular to record any evidence relating to the medieval settlement of Aston Tirrold.

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 photographs, 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 was present on site during the course of any groundwork that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains. This included ground reduction, the excavation for foundations.

Archaeological deposits and features revealed were cleaned by hand and recorded in plan before being excavated and recorded at an appropriate level. Archaeological features were recorded by written, drawn and photographic record.

4 RESULTS

Prior to the excavation of the north foundation trench, the walls of the former cart shed and toilet block were removed along with part of boundary wall on the north boundary. The north foundation trench was excavated down to a depth of around 1m. The lowest layer, context (05) was a layer of grey clayey chalk which was identified as a natural layer. Above the natural layer was a firm, compact layer of very dark brown silty loam, context (04). This layer was 0.45m thick but had been truncated to a thickness of 0.1m or less towards the east of the foundation. Layer (04) was identified as a subsoil layer which was also identified beyond the area of the former cart shed. Overlying context (04) was context (03). This layer was composed of fragments of concrete, loose and roughly laid bricks, and angular chalk boulders. Context (03) was between 0.25m and 0.3m thick extending to a thickness of 0.6m towards the east end of the north foundation. Context (03) did not extend much beyond the concrete floor surface of the former cart shed and was identified as a hard core layer to this construction. Context (02) was deposited above context (03). Context (02) was a 0.09m thick layer of loose loam with a small inclusion of small sub rounded pebbles and angular flints. Laid above context (02), context (01) was a concrete floor that was between 0.06 and 0.2m thick. This layer was the concrete floor of the former car shed and toilet block.

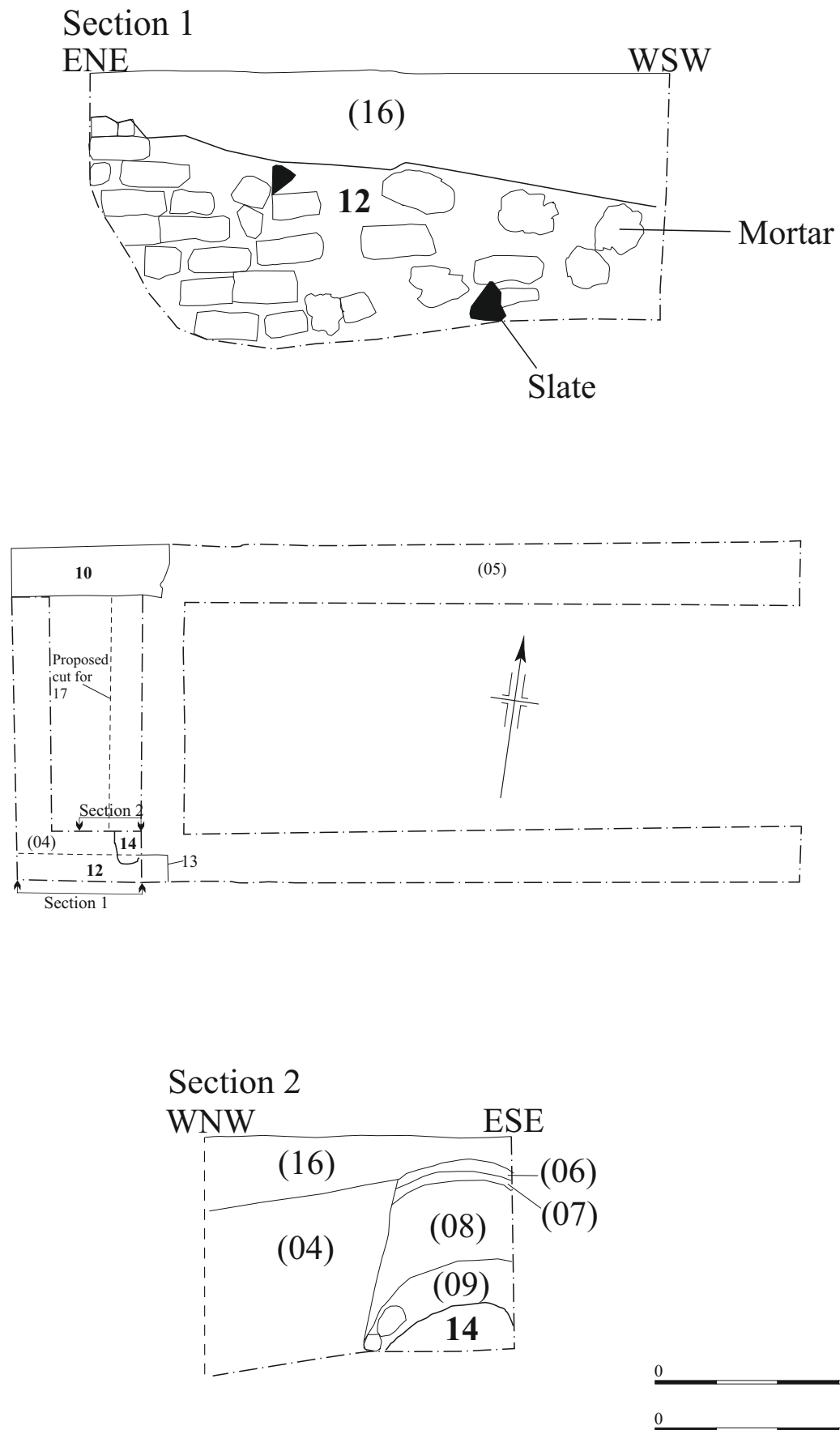


Figure 2. Trench plan and sections

Towards the far west end of the northern foundation trench, a concrete block, context (10) protruded from the section 0.4m into the foundation trench (Fig. 2). This was 0.9m wide and 0.15 to 0.2m thick. Context (10) was the foundation of the remaining west part of the boundary wall but was not present in the remaining area of the north foundation trench for the new build.

Beyond the area of the former cart shed and toilet block, the continuation of subsoil layer (04) was overlaid by context (16). Context (16) was a loose loamy topsoil layer that was between 0.2m and 0.4m deep. It contained fragments of brick or tile, chalk boulders and flowerpot. Three fragments of brown glazed post-medieval pottery were also recovered from this layer.

At the south end of the middle foundation, the corner of a brick wall was excavated, context (12). Further foundation excavations revealed the continuation of this wall towards the west (Fig. 2, section 1; plate 1). At the limits of the excavation, wall (12) stood to a height of 0.4m to 0.7m, extended into the trench by approximately 0.4m, and was greater than 2.1m in length. The surviving wall was very fragmentary with fragments of loose, light yellow mortar and slate. Wall (12) was overlaid by topsoil. The cut to wall (12), context 13, was probably cut through context (04).

In the west section of the middle foundation trench and in the north section of the south west foundation, the cut and fills of a robbed wall were identified (Figure 2, section 2; plate 2). Context 17 was identified as a robber cut and was cut through context (04) or possibly (16). It was 0.35 to 0.5m wide and between 0.48 and 0.6m deep. Context 17 was filled by context (09) a 0.14m thick deposit of loose loam containing brick fragments. Deposited above was context (08), a mid brown and yellow silty gravelly deposit that was between 0.26 and 0.4m thick. Above this was context (07), a 0.04m layer mid orange sand and gravel. Context (06) was deposited above context (07) and was a 0.04m thick layer mid to light grey clayey chalk. Context (16) appeared to be deposited above (06) but it is possible that this may have been backfilled topsoil. The robber cut, context 17 was cut down to what were probably the remains of a stone foundation wall, context (14). The robber cut (17) ran at a right angle from wall (12) towards the north, possibly for a length of 4.4m. It is probable that wall (12) had been associated with the robbed wall and was probably laid above (14).



Plate 1. Section 1



Plate 2. Section 2

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery (By David Gilbert)

Samples of post-medieval pottery were taken from context (16) for identification and not retained. This was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

Context (16)

REW: Red Earthenware, dated 1550+

6 DISCUSSION

Only the remains of a garden wall and a robbed wall were discovered during the excavation of the foundations for the new build. No dating evidence was present for the robbed wall. The majority of the site was quite heavily disturbed though this disturbance was shallower towards the west side of the site. No finds worthy of note were identified and were mostly brick fragments and fragments of flowerpot. Three fragments of post medieval pottery were recovered but these were only topsoil finds and were broadly dated to the Post Medieval. No other finds or features were identified.

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 Oxfordshire Museum Service.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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 et al, Excavations at St Ebbe's *Oxoniensia* **49**, 181-219.

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