

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

CHURCH FARM HOUSE, NORTHMOOR,

WITNEY, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 4211 0260

On behalf of

Mr G. Ogilvie

MARCH 2015

REPORT FOR Mr G. Ogilvie
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief on land at Church Farm House, Standlake Road, Northmoor, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 4211 0260). Groundwork consisted of the excavation of 10 post pads and a soakaway. No archaeological features or deposits were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located to the south of the church of St Denys and some eighty metres south of the road leading to Standlake (NGR SP 4211 0260).

The site is situated at about 64m OD and the underlying geology is First Terrace Gravel.

1.2 Planning Background

West Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for the erection of a barn (14/0963/P/FP). Due to the archaeological and historical importance of the surrounding area a condition was attached to the permission requiring a watching brief to be maintained during the course of building operations or construction works on the site. This was in line with NPPF (the planning policy current at the time) and other Local Planning policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Church Farmhouse is a Grade II Listed Building dating to the later part of the seventeenth century. The adjacent Church of St Denys dates to the early thirteenth century and formed an integral part of the medieval settlement. Just to the east of it there is evidence for a small moated site. It has been suggested that this was a grange of Abingdon Abbey but there is a little to support this. There is documentary evidence of two buildings or houses west of the rectory in the vicinity of Church Farmhouse in 1381.

Directly to the south is an extensive spread of cropmarks that have been identified by aerial photography. This appears to represent later prehistoric and Romano British settlement and activity across an extensive tract of landscape. Archaeological investigation shows that features survive at a relatively shallow depth cut into the natural gravel. Post Roman activity within the village has effectively masked any cropmarks but there is no reason to doubt that the earlier features extend beneath the village footprint

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

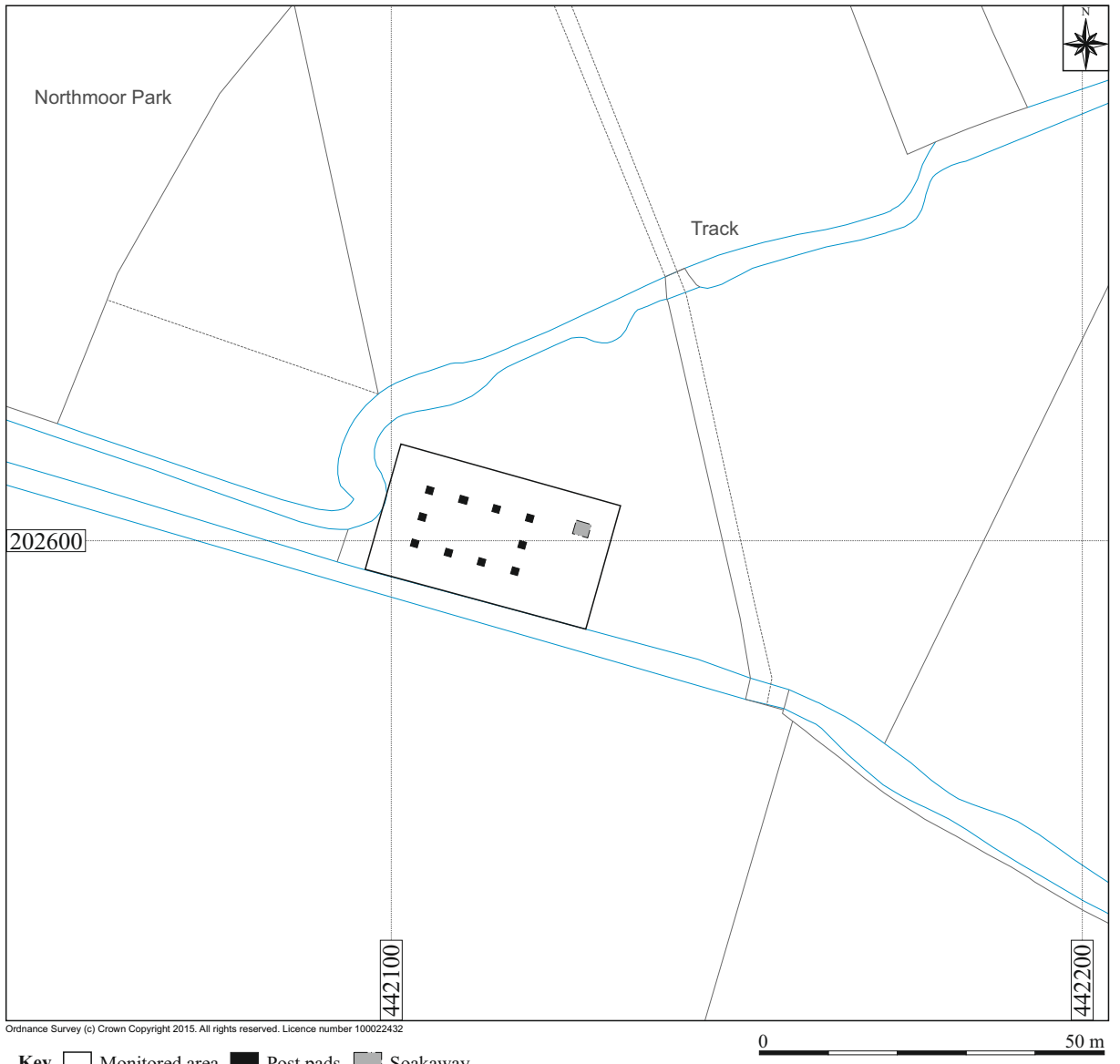
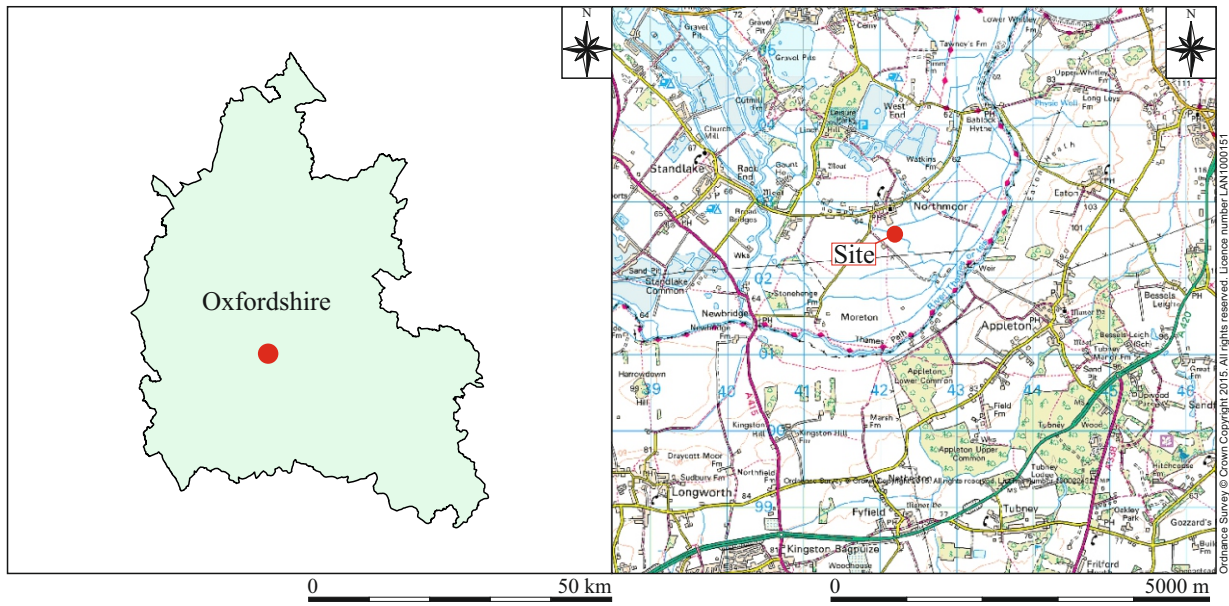


Figure 1: Site location

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

In particular:

- To record any evidence relating to known prehistoric and Roman and remains in the area.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) the archaeological advisors to West Oxfordshire District Council. 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. A photographic record was also produced.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

3.2 Methodology

Excavation was undertaken using an 8 tonne 360° excavator.

4 RESULTS

Groundwork comprised of the excavation of 10 1m x 1m post pads, and a 2.5m by 2m soakaway. No archaeological features or deposits were present in any of the trenches.

The lowest horizon encountered was the natural geology (102), a compact mid whitish yellow fine sandy gravel. The natural was overlain by subsoil (101), a mid to dark greyish brown silty clay loam that varied in thickness from 0.1m to 0.4m. This subsoil was overlain by topsoil (100), a soft dark blackish grey silty clay loam that varied in thickness from 0.1m to 0.3m.

There was a notable variation in depth of the soil horizons across the site: in the northernmost trenches the combined depth of the soil horizons was 0.2m - 0.3m, while this increased to between 0.6m – 0.8m in the southernmost trenches.

5 FINDS

No artefactual evidence was recovered.

6 DISCUSSION

No archaeological features or deposits were present in any of the trenches, and no residual artefactual evidence was recovered from soil layers (100) and (101).

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

John Moore Heritage Services, 2014 *14/0963/P/FP Church Farm House, Standlake Road, Northmoor, Oxfordshire. Archaeological Watching Brief. Written Scheme of Investigation*. Unpublished