

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

LOWFIELDS, MANOR FARM BARNES,

HENTON, CHINNOR, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 76320266

*On behalf of
Mr & Mrs M Allison*

JULY 2015

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CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| SUMMARY | 1 |
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 Site Location | 1 |
| 1.2 Planning Background | 1 |
| 1.3 Archaeological Background | 1 |
| 2. AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION | 1 |
| 3. STRATEGY | 3 |
| 3.1 Research Design | 3 |
| 3.2 Methodology | 3 |
| 4. RESULTS | 3 |
| 5. FINDS | 8 |
| 5.1 CBM | 8 |
| 6. DISCUSSION | 8 |
| 7. BIBLIOGRAPHY | 9 |
| FIGURES AND PLATES | |
| | Page |
| Figure 1. Site Location | 2 |
| Figure 2. Trench 1 plan with sections | 5 |
| Plate 1. Section 2 showing garden feature wall 8 | 4 |
| Plate 2. Section 5 showing edge of moat 12 and wall 10 | 6 |
| Plate 3. Section 5 showing moat 12 | 6 |
| Plate 4. Trench 1 | 7 |
| Plate 5. Showing raised ground to the south of the moat | 7 |
| Plate 6. Trench 2 | 8 |

SUMMARY

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at Lowfields, Manor Farm Barns, Henton, Chinnor, Oxfordshire. It consisted of the monitoring of two foundation trenches for extensions to the east side of the property. Trench 1 contained the remains of part of the moat, backfilled with Post-Medieval debris and Trench 2 was devoid of any archaeology.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site at Lowfields was located to the east of the road through Henton as part of the complex of Manor Farm Barns in Henton, Chinnor, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 76320266). The site was at 90m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology was Gault Formation.

1.2 Planning Background

South Oxfordshire District Council had granted planning permission (ref. P14/S2666/HH) for erection of two single storey extensions to the east elevation and one single storey extension to the south elevation. Due to the potential for the work to disturb archaeological deposits a condition had been attached to the permission requiring the implementation of an archaeological watching brief. This is in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) had advised on the scope of work required.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The development site lay within a medieval moated site (County Historic Environment Record number 342648). The moat may actually be part of a complex medieval site as an additional east – west section through the middle has been recorded, which divides the enclosure into two islands, as well as a further embanked enclosure moat to the south of this.

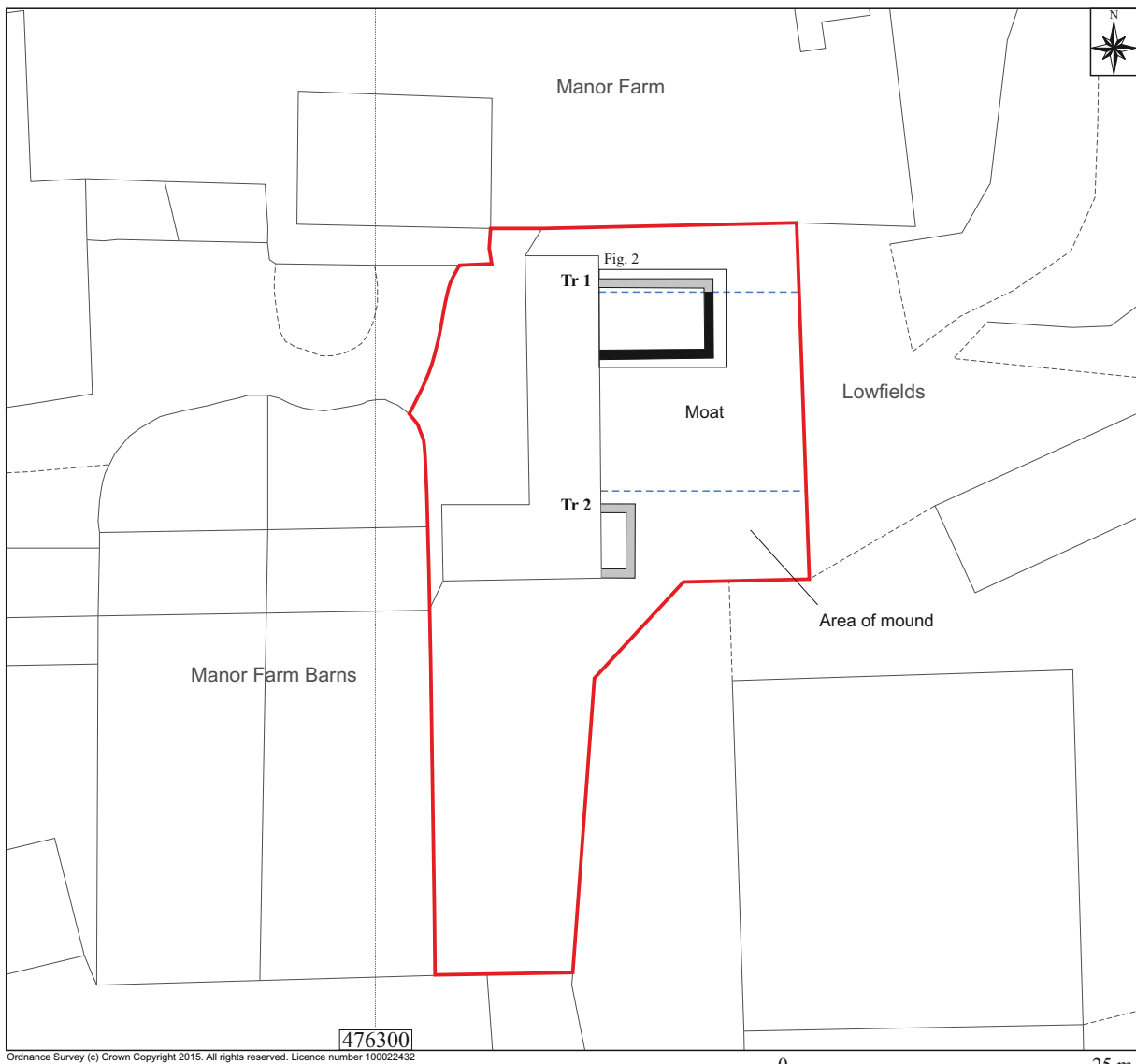
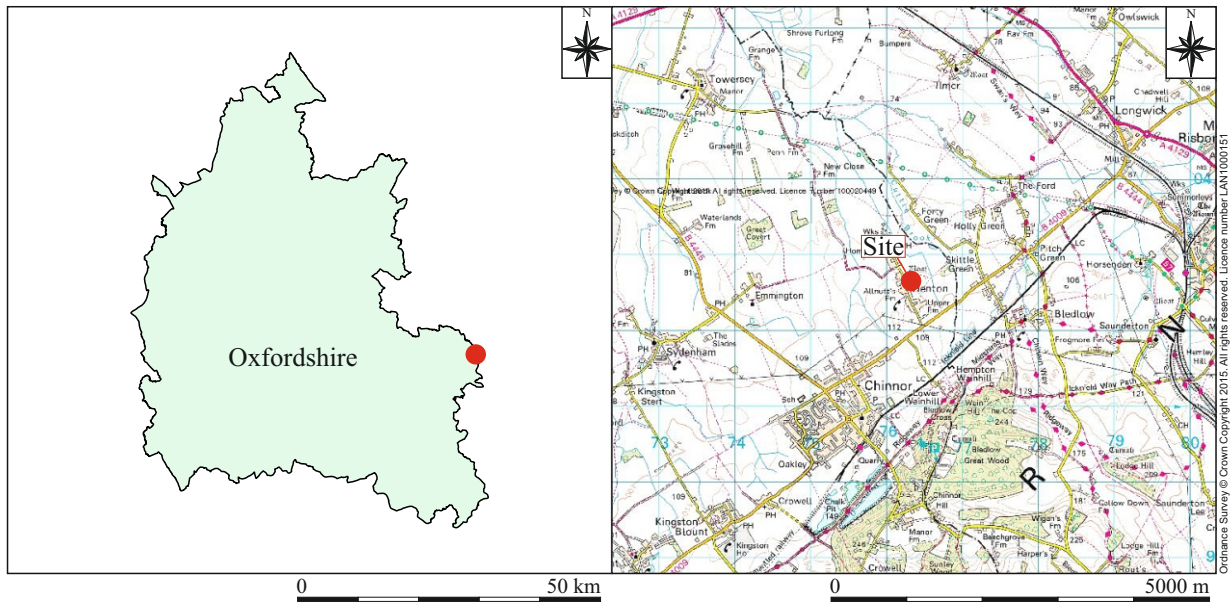
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- 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 the Medieval moated site.



Key Site boundary Monitored area Archaeological features

Figure 1: Site location

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with OHaNET. 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 Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was to be present on site during the course of any groundwork that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains.

Any archaeological deposits and features revealed were cleaned by hand and recorded in plan before being excavated and recorded at an appropriate level. Any archaeological features or other remains i.e. concentrations of artefacts, were recorded by written, drawn and photographic record. Where archaeological features were exposed during any ground reduction but otherwise would remain unaffected they were recorded only by plan and written description. Where remains were impacted on then they were sample excavated. All artefacts were collected and retained except for concentrations of building material where a representative sample was kept.

4 RESULTS

Two foundation trenches for two single storey extensions on the east elevation of the property were monitored (Fig. 1). The third extension on the south elevation of the property is not being constructed in this phase of works.

Foundation Trench 1 (Fig. 2, Plates 1 - 5), for a 5.5m wide x 8m long extension was located on the eastern elevation of the existing building and was 0.6m wide and up to 1.5m deep. It contained the northern section of a large east – west ditch cut into the natural clay and was partially backfilled with rubble, with modern garden features overlying it.

Ditch 12, had a moderately sloping side and was exposed for a width of 4.5m, 8m length and excavated to a depth of up to 1.5m, with the southern side and base of the ditch remaining unexcavated (Fig. 2). It was filled by lower fill (7), a 0.5m thick layer of mid-grey silt with dark organic lenses with no finds, formed in wet / marshy conditions. Overlying (7) was a 0.6m thick layer of deliberate backfill of chalk rubble in a grey silty clay, (6).

Construction cut 3 for the eastern wall of the existing property was cut into layer (6) and was filled by a loose, dark brown rubble (4) (Fig. 2, S. 01 & 04). Overlying these

was a 0.5m thick 'landscaping' layer of made ground, a pale grey silty clay (5) and (11), that contained modern debris, including a car wheel, and wall 10, an east – west brick wall (Fig. 2, S.05). The wall was situated in the north-eastern corner of the trench and consisted of a single brick wide, five brick high bonded wall, 0.2m wide and 0.32m thick, forming a possible garden feature.

Brick wall, 8, overlay layer (5) / (11) (Fig. 2, S. 02); this was situated running east – west along the northern extent of the trench and formed part of a garden feature constructed along the northern edge of the infilled moat. Wall 8 consisted of a single course of bricks situated 0.35m down from the top of the trench that extends for 2.6m, where it stops and forms an upstanding wall six brick courses high. This garden feature was then overlain by a loose mid-brown loam garden soil (9). Finally a 0.1m thick layer of turf grass and topsoil overlay the deposits.

Foundation trench 2 (Fig. 1, Plate 6), for a 3.5m wide x 5.5m long extension was located along the south-eastern elevation of the existing building, it was 0.6m wide, 2m deep along the southern extent, 2.5m deep along the eastern extent and 2m deep along the northern extent.

It contained a 0.1m thick layer of brown silty clay subsoil overlying the natural clays, cut through these were two modern drains. No archaeological features were identified in this trench.



Plate1. Section 2 showing garden feature wall 8

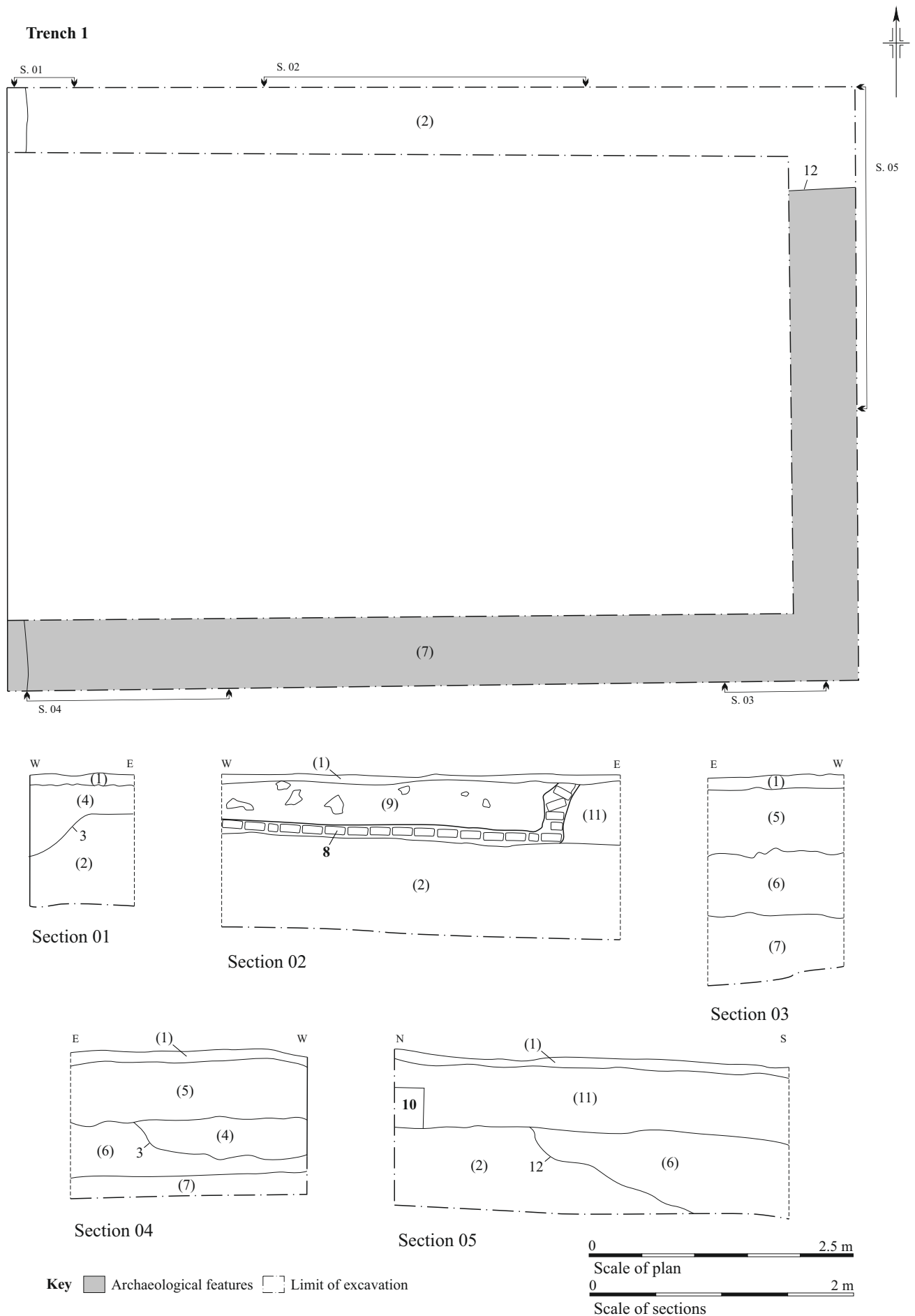


Figure 2: Trench 1 plan with sections



Plate 2. Section 5 showing edge of moat 12 and wall 10



Plate 3. Section 5 showing moat 12



Plate 4. Trench 1



Plate 5. Showing raised ground to the south of the moat



Plate 6. Trench 2

5 FINDS

5.1 Ceramic building material

A single, incomplete example of roof tile was recovered from deliberate moat backfill context (6). The rectangular fragment weighed 618 gr and is preserved to its full width of 165 mm and thickness of 18 mm. The length is preserved to a maximum of 120 mm, and does not include the method of suspension. The fragment is dateable to the Late Medieval-Early Post-Medieval period. It has not been retained.

6 DISCUSSION

Trench 1 was located within a linear earthwork that consisted of a slight east – west dip, with the ground rising up for *c.* 1m to the south, where trench 2 was located and formed part of an earthwork complex forming a medieval moated site.

Trench 1 revealed the northern edge of an east – west arm of the moat, that divided the area enclosed by the moat into two islands. The southern extent of the moat ran *c.* 1m north of trench 2, where the ground level increased on the earthwork, this would give a total width of the moat at *c.* 14m. Trench 1 did not reveal the base of the ditch as the level of impact stopped at 1.5m below the ground surface. Evidence for the backfilling of the moat, construction of a building and garden landscaping occurred from the Post – Medieval period onwards.

Trench 2 was devoid of any archaeological features.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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