

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

ELM TREE FARMHOUSE,

STATION ROAD, BLACKTHORN, OXFORDSHIRE

SU 6241 1945

On behalf of

Mr. R. Burden

FEBRUARY 2005

REPORT FOR

Mr R. Burden
Elm Tree Farmhouse
Station Road
Blackthorn
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PREPARED BY

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FIELDWORK

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JMHS Project No:**

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Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the groundworks for the construction of a ménage to the rear of Elm Tree Farmhouse. No significant remains were present.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site was located to the rear of Elm Tree Farm, Station Road on the south side of Blackthorn (SP 6241 1945). The geology was Lower Oxford Clay and the site was located at approximately 62m OD.

1.2 Planning Background

Cherwell District Council granted planning in September 2004 for the change of use from agricultural land to paddock for the keeping of horses, garden and of an area 25m by 35m for use as a ménage. Due to the potential presence of below ground archaeological deposits a condition was attached to the planning consent that required the implementation of an archaeological watching brief during the course of the groundworks for the ménage in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site lies within the historic core of the village as shown on the Davis map of 1797 and is adjacent to the area of the shrunken medieval settlement of Blackthorn (County Sites and Monuments Record SMR12889). Recent archaeological work in the area adjacent to the proposal site (TVAS 2001; Oxford Archaeology 2003) has revealed evidence of late Saxon and medieval activity in the area.

Two late Saxon/medieval ditches overlain by a probable later medieval midden were found during excavation in 2001. Modern ponds and several undated boundary ditches cut into an earlier ploughsoil were recorded in 2003. It is probable that these ditches relate to the late Saxon/medieval ditches identified in the 2001 excavation. It was considered possible that this complex of boundary ditches and deposits and features relating to activity associated with these boundaries and the later midden deposits may have been present in the area of the proposed development.

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 remains related to the late Saxon and medieval activity in the area
- To make the results of the investigations public.

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, on behalf of the local planning authority.

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist examined the site after the topsoil strip had been carried out. A cleaned out drainage ditch was also examined. In general the ground reduction was to a depth of *c.* 300 mm. No potential archaeological horizons were revealed.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [] indicate features i.e. walls, pit cuts; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material.

The lowest deposit, seen in the side of the drainage ditch, comprised compact pale grey, slightly brown, clay (03). This constituted the natural of the site and was seen to be *c.* 400 mm below the present ground level. Above the clay was an old ploughsoil of compact pale brown-grey clay *c.* 300 mm thick (02). Overlying the ploughsoil was a topsoil of dark grey-brown slightly silty clay (01) seen along the north edge of the area and across the southern 5 m of the stripped area. Underlying a thin covering of topsoil and cut into the old ploughsoil was a dump of material comprising large slabs of broken concrete, bricks, corrugated iron and metal gates mixed in with topsoil. This dump covered the whole area except for the southern 5 m of the area and was at a minimum depth of 450 mm below the ploughsoil (02).

5 FINDS

No finds, other than the modern rubbish, were observed.

6 DISCUSSION

The site has in the recent past been heavily disturbed by the use as a refuse pit or as a slurry pit infilled with rubbish. This would have destroyed any archaeological deposits present except for the bases of deeper cut features such as ditches and pits. Along the southern edge of the area the top of the old ploughsoil was exposed and no features were present cut into it.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994 *Standard and Guidance for
Archaeological Field Evaluations*