

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT
LAND TO R/O 'COST CUTTERS', HIGH STREET
SHIPTON-UNDER-WYCHWOOD**

SP 27871794

On behalf of

Heritage (Cotswold) Ltd

JULY 2005

REPORT FOR

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Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation of foundation and service trenches for the erection of four new terraced houses with parking to the rear of 'Cost Cutters'. No material relating to Saxon or medieval settlement was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site was located to the rear of 'Cost Cutters', east of the High Street (A361), Shipton-under-Wychwood (NGR SP 27871794). The geology is Lower Lias and the site lies at approximately 102m OD. The site was used as an amenity space to 'Cost Cutters' and has an area of 0.13ha.

1.2 Planning Background

West Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for the erection of 4 new terraced houses with parking (03/1937/P/FP). Due to the archaeological potential of the site a condition was attached to the planning consent that required the implementation of an archaeological watching brief during the course of the groundworks in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services issued a Brief for the work.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The development site lies within the historic core of Shipton-under-Wychwood. A series of pits, gullies, and a limestone flagged surface were found during an archaeological investigation to the north of the site (Bradley's Garage). The ceramic evidence dated these features to the 13th century (TVAS 2000). Previous to this a Saxon Minster church occupied the site, and burials of that period have been found in the vicinity of it. Other archaeological investigations around the church and the green have identified both Saxon and medieval activity.

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 Saxon and medieval settlement of Shipton-under-Wychwood.

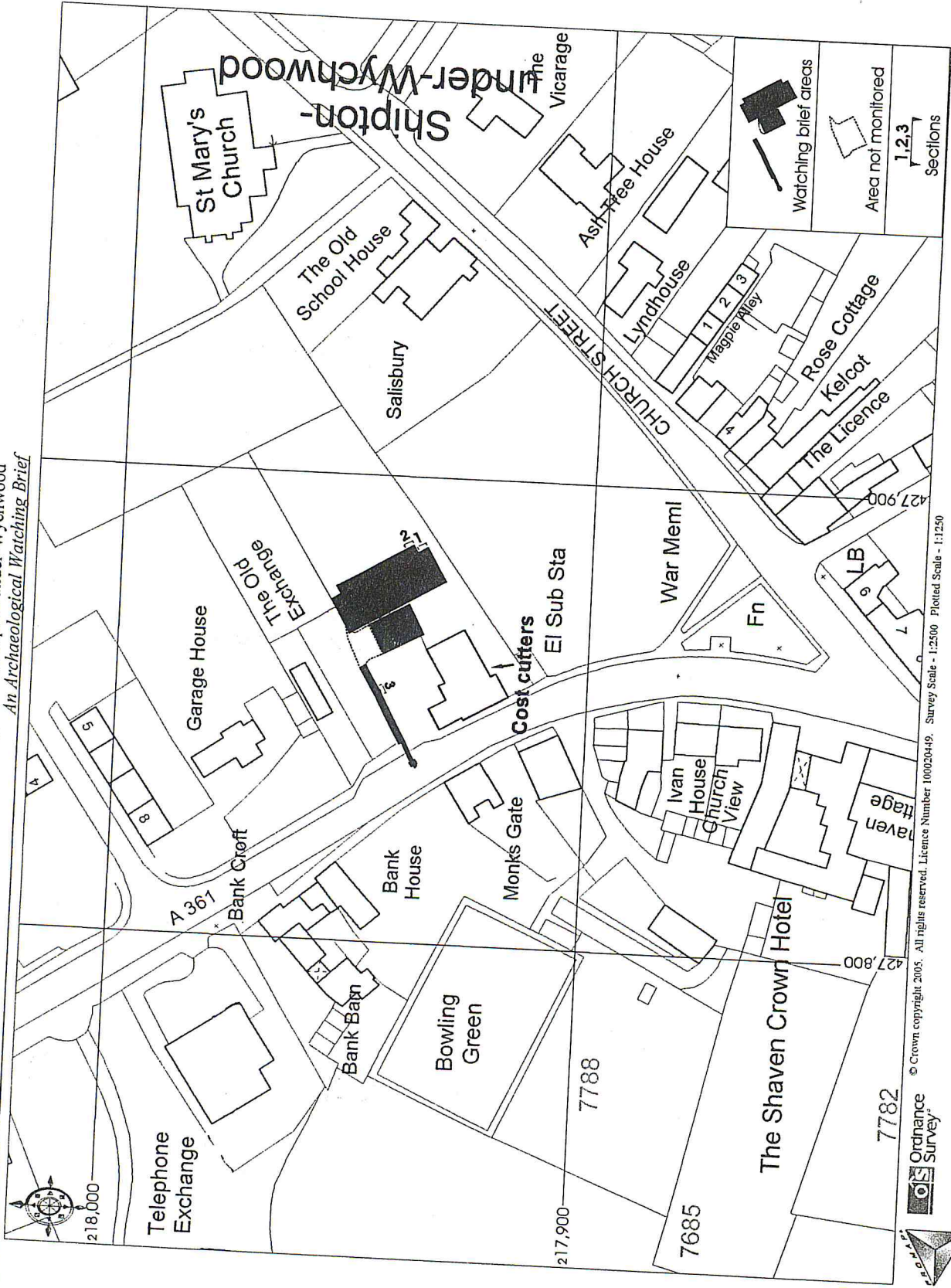


Figure 1. Site location and watching brief areas

- 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.

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

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist monitored the excavation of trenches for the foundations and a service. The stripping of the site had already been carried out prior the arrival of the archaeologist and included demolition of an existing modern store building and levelling of the north area.

The foundation trenches were generally 600mm wide and 1700mm deep. The trenches were excavated south to north over a period of four days. Part of the north area was not monitored, as it was established that the ground had been heavily disturbed during the building works for the former storage building and by an old septic tank.

The service trench that was monitored was between 100 and 150mm wide and 1500 to 1700 mm deep. The trench was c. 24m long and was excavated W to E. The stripping of the west area at the front of the new buildings was partially monitored. It was reduced to a depth of 1050 mm to reach firm deposits. Present in this area were very mixed modern deposits under a thick layer of topsoil

The spoil derived from all trenches and stripping was scanned in order to recover any significant artefacts.

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.

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 (02) comprised compact orange brownish clay with light blue lenses of clay and occasional well rounded pebbles (20-60mm). This constituted the Lower Lias and was seen to be c. 600-800mm below the present ground level.

Above the natural was a garden soil deposit (01) of compact dark grey silty clay, c. 500-700 mm thick with 1% (by volume) of sub-angular pebbles and lenses of soft orange clay and occasional lenses of brownish loose silty sand with bricks and tiles.

In the area of the SE corner of the new build was a series of deposits, overlying the natural soil and beneath the topsoil (01) at between 660-920 mm in depth.

- In the east facing section a deposit of loose grey brownish silty sand (03), c.160-200mm thick with very occasional flecks of coal and containing abundant brick, tile, glass and mortar fragments was encountered at c.660-800 mm below existing ground level. Within this deposit were twentieth century pottery, animal bone and iron nail fragments.

-In the west facing section at c.780-920 mm below existing ground level a succession of two deposits (04) and (05) was observed. The first consisted of a thin white band of loose chalk/limestone (04) lying onto top of a compact purple/orange reddish deposit, c. 500mm thick with occasional mortar and iron fragments. A sherd of modern pottery was also encountered.

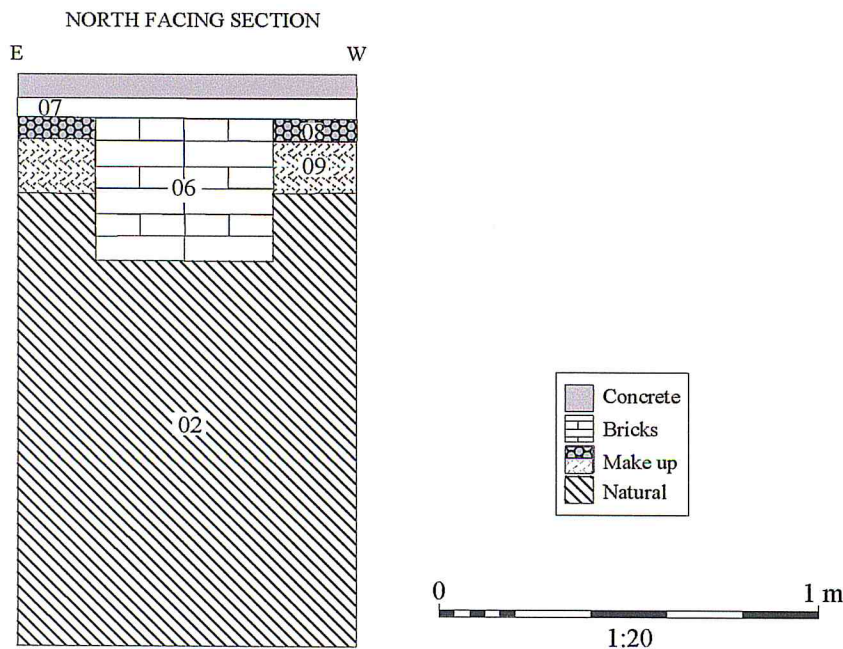


Figure 2. Section of part of Service Trench

At the northern end of the area for the new build the ground had been heavily disturbed during the building works for the former storage building and an old septic tank. This disturbance cut through the garden soil (01) present in the whole area.

During the excavation of the service trench a brick floor [07] and four brick supports/foundations [06] were observed under the existing concrete layer (Fig. 2).

Fragments of white tiles were found within [07]. Underlying the floor was a shallow (40mm) gravel deposit (08) and a 160mm layer of compact dark-grey slightly sandy clay with orange silty lenses and occasional small fragments of limestone (09). The natural (02) was found at a general depth of 300mm below existing ground level.

5 FINDS

Only twentieth century material was recovered from the investigations and was not retained.

6 DISCUSSION

The area appears to have been disturbed by the former storage building and septic tank and by landscaping (01, 03-05). Both deposits 03 and 05 contained 20th century pottery and may be associated with the building; now Cost Cutters. The deposits 03-05 were lying on the top of the natural clay, which sloped down from west to east. The thick deposit of topsoil (01) had been laid to level the area forming a garden terrace.

The brick floor and supports/footings of a former relatively modern building were revealed. It was aligned with the existing Cost Cutters building and occupied the current car park area. The building is not shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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