



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

**P14/V2624/FUL – LAND PART OF THE CROFT,
BARNARDS CLOSE, APPLEFORD, ABINGDON,
OXFORDSHIRE OX14 4NS,**

NGR SU52639369

On behalf of

Challow Design

JANUARY 2017

REPORT FOR Challow Design
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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at land part of The Croft, Barnards Close, Appleford, Abingdon (NGR SU52639369). Groundworks consisted of the excavation for the footings of a new 5-bed dwelling and garage. A total of six pits were found. Five were of medieval date and one, containing an antler, was likely early prehistoric. Medieval pottery and considerable late - post medieval material was recovered from disturbed topsoil. The site shows significant archaeological potential and is set within the vicinity of Roman remains and a Saxon burial ground.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site lies west of Barnards Close and north of Main Road, Appleton (NGR SU52639369). Previously it is part of the garden of The Croft. The site lies at approximately 52m OD. The underlying geology is Gault Formation mudstone with superficial deposits of Northmoor Sand and Gravel.

1.2 Planning Background

The Vale of White Horse District Council granted planning permission for the erection of a 5-bed dwelling and garage (P14/V2624/FUL). 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 and Local Planning policies.

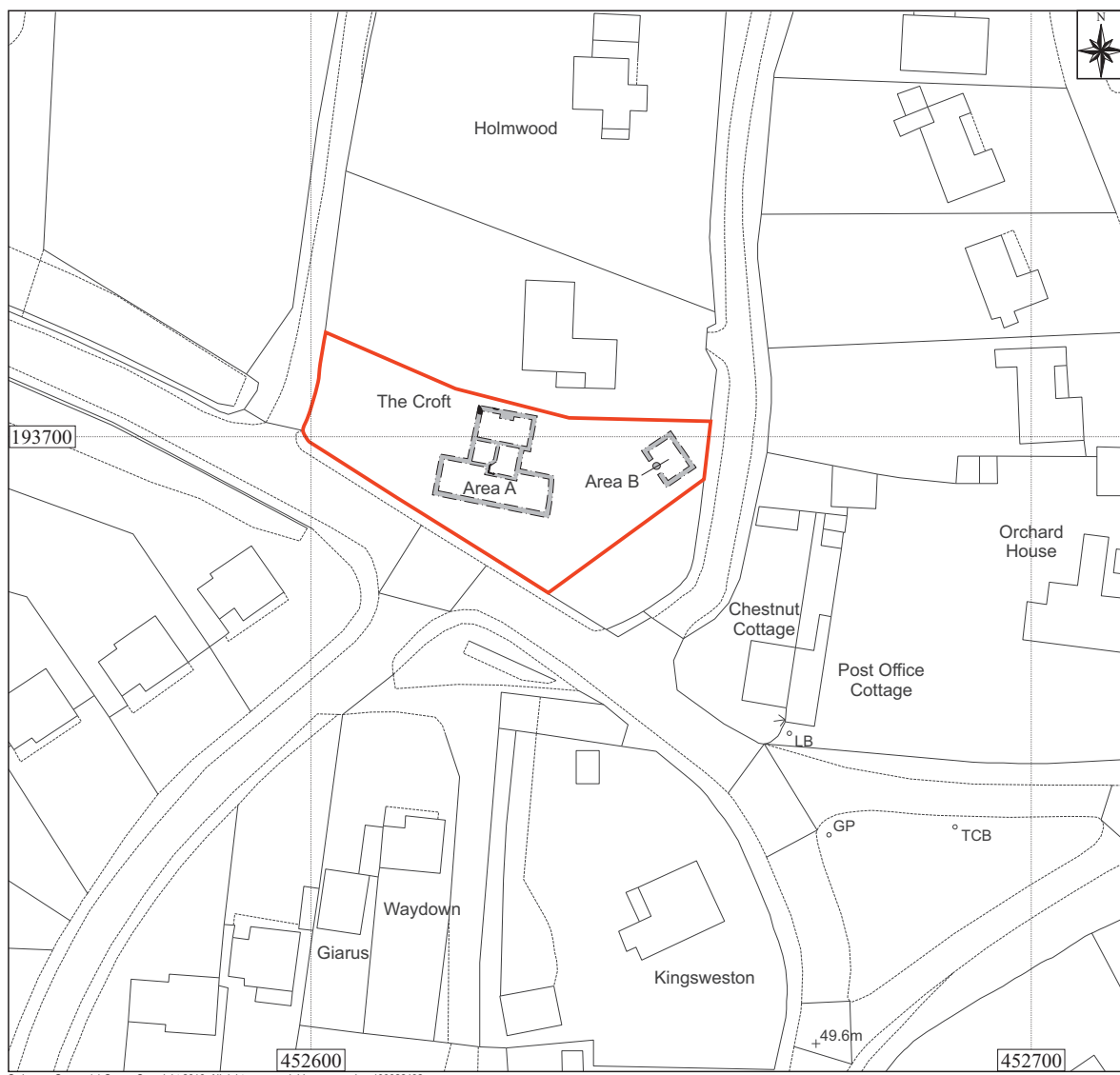
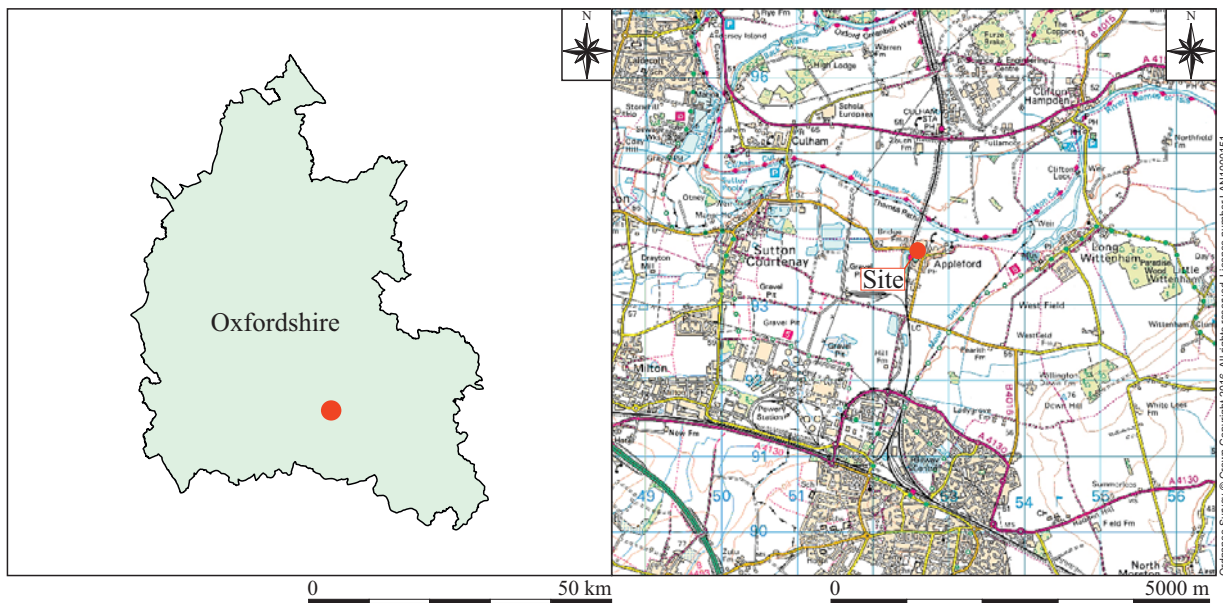
1.3 Archaeological Background

The proposed development lies in an area of considerable archaeological potential immediately southwest of a number of human burials. Although these particular burials were undated, they are immediately southwest of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery and may be further Anglo-Saxon burials. Roman pottery has also been recovered within the vicinity of this site.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

As laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation the aims were:

- To make a record of any significant archaeological remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.
- In particular to record any evidence relating to the undated graves to the northeast and/or the Roman pottery found in the area.



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 Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team, the archaeological advisor to the Vale of White Horse District Council.

3.2 Methodology

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

Fieldwork commenced with the ground reduction of the building footprint with a 5 T mechanical tracked excavator with a toothless grading bucket, under archaeological supervision. The development foundation trenches were excavated to a depth of around 1m.

Topsoil and subsoil was removed from the development area enclosed by the foundation trenches. This was carried out with a toothless bucket.



Plate 1: NNE view of NW corner of Area A footings working shot



Plate 2: Completed excavation of footings in Area A. NW facing



Plate 3: Completed excavation of Area B. East facing



Plate 4: Representative section of NW stretch of footings of Area B. NW facing



Plate 5: Soakaway pits general view/working shot. SW facing



Plate 6: Representative section of northern soakaway pit. North facing

Where archaeological horizons were encountered they were cleaned by hand and excavated appropriately. 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. A photographic record was also produced

The resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned, especially for finds relating the nearby Saxon burials situated immediately south west of the site.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts, numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material, while numbers in bold indicate structural features.

Footings for the proposed house and garage were divided in to individual areas for recording. Area A was for the house trenches and Area B was for the garage foundations and context numbers were assigned accordingly in respect to this. Area A contained all of the archaeological features on site. Two square soakaway pits were also excavated west of Area A which measured approximately 1m wide and 1m deep. Channel trenches linking these to the footings were only cut into the topsoil.

The dating evidence indicates that archaeological activity on site ranges from early prehistoric to the late medieval period. Stratigraphical analysis of the features has indicated four distinguishable phases of activity:

- Phase 0: Geology
- Phase 1: Early Prehistoric
- Phase 2: Medieval
- Phase 3: Post Medieval

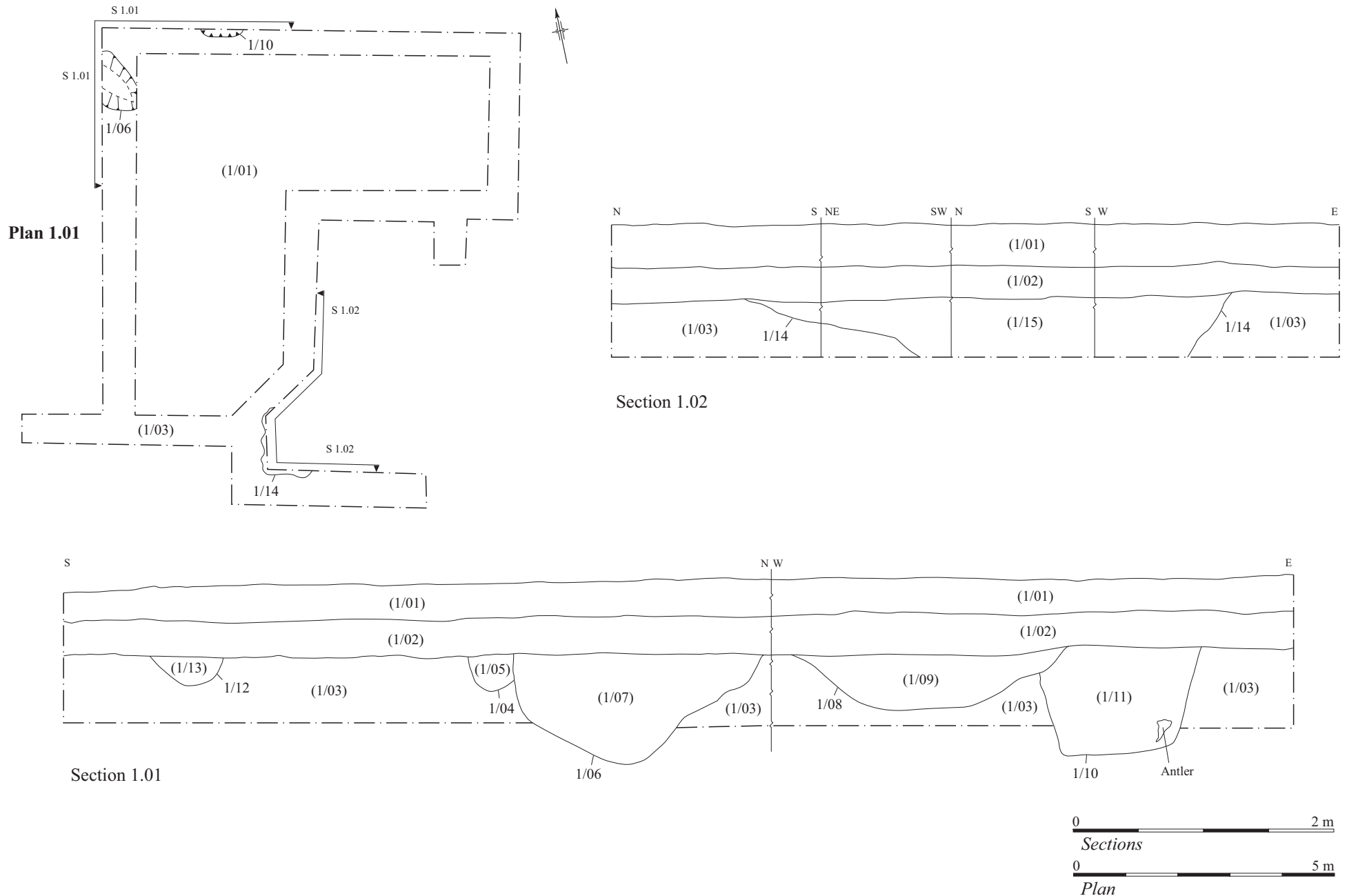


Figure 2: Representative sections in bulk of footings trench incorporating all archaeological features on site and plan of relevant sector

The natural geology (1/03) remained consistent throughout the site and comprised a light brown/yellow sandy gravel. The natural was sealed by an undisturbed subsoil (1/02) with a maximum thickness of 0.24m across the site. This was derived from a natural accumulation of silt throughout the medieval period. The subsoil was in turn sealed by deposit (1/01), a topsoil which was 0.30m deep. This was disturbed through bioturbation and the constructing of the present house within the property.

Five modern tree bole features were present across the site cutting into the subsoil and natural sandy gravel. Four of these were situated in Area B. Considerable root action was present in the peripheral areas of site close to trees and hedges. The fills of tree boles all appeared consistent with this in terms of their composition and root content.

4.1 Phase 1 Early Prehistoric (Figure 2)

The earliest phase of activity on site is represented by a single pit 1/10 discovered amongst a cluster of intercutting pit features around the northwest corner of the development footings. It cut into the natural sandy gravel (1/03) and was overlain by the subsoil (1/02). It was flat bottomed with broadly straight steep sides (Plates 7 & 8). It was 1.24m wide and 0.86m deep. It contained a single fill of light brown/yellow silt gravel which likely developed naturally throughout the lifetime of the pit. It was truncated by pit 1/08 on its western side. A crown and main beam segment of a red deer antler was found in the eastern edge of the pit base. This had significant cut marks around the base and burnt areas around the crown.



Plate 7: South facing section of pits 1/08 and 1/10. Western end



Plate 8: South facing section of pits 1/08 and 1/10. Eastern end

4.2 Phase 2 Medieval (Figure 2)

Three other pits were recorded around the northwest corner of the footings for Area A in a general alignment from north to south. All of these were cut into the natural sandy gravel (1/03) and overlain by the subsoil (1/02). Pit 1/08, situated at the most northern extent of this alignment, truncates pit 1/10 on its western side. This pit was 2.42m wide and 0.42m deep. It was flat bottomed with broadly straight sides at a gradual angle. The two pits immediately south of this ran in chronological sequence from south to north represented by [1/06] cutting [1/04]. Pit 1/06 measured 1.88m wide and 0.44m deep. It was of a general concave profile with undulations throughout. It contained one fairly large and fresh sherd of medieval pottery and occasional animal bone. Pit 1/04 measured 0.36m wide and 0.30m deep. It was relatively narrow and also concave throughout. Both pits 1/04 and 1/06 were presumably ovular, and oriented NW – SE which was evident in opposing sections of the footings. Their length was greater than 0.60m. All three of these pits contained single fills consisting of a dark brown/red/grey loose silt which accumulated naturally through time after the use of the pits.

Pit 1/14 was present around the central area of the footings for Area A. It represented the largest pit on site. It was cut into the natural sandy gravel (1/03) and overlain by subsoil (1/02). It had broadly straight sides at a gradual angle and was 2m wide and 1m thick. It contained four sherds of medieval pottery which are of the same date as the Early to Mid-Medieval pottery found in pit 1/06 and also fairly large and fresh. This pit contained occasional animal bone throughout. The basal extent of this feature could not be excavated due to its location within the bulk. Its fill (1/15) was of a dark brown/red/grey loose silt and represented a natural siltation.



Plate 9: South east facing section of pits 1/06 and 1/04



Plate 10: South facing section of pit 1/14

4.3 Phase 2 Medieval – Post-Medieval (Figure 2)

Disturbed topsoil (1/01) contained 10 sherds of pottery ranging from 1200 to 1800 century. It also contained a significant amount of Late Medieval and Post-Medieval glass bottle fragments and occasional brick, roof tile and one metal clasp. The artefact density in topsoil (1/01) was generally greater from the later to post medieval periods.

4.4 Undated features (Figure 2)

Pit 1/12 was isolated 5.5m south from pit 1/04. It contained no dating evidence and, similarly to pit 1/04, was small, narrow and concave throughout measuring 0.48m wide and 0.26m deep. Its fill (1/13) was of a dark brown/red/grey loose silt which represented a natural disuse accumulation.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 15 sherds with a total weight of 369g. It consisted of a mixture of medieval and post-medieval material, and was recorded using the conventions of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

- OXAM:** Brill/Boarstall Ware, AD1200 – 1600. 1 sherd, 105g.
OXBF: North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD1050–1400. 5 sherds, 84g.
OXCE: Tin-glazed Earthenware, 1613 – 1800. 1 sherd, 6g.
OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 6 sherds, 135g.
OXEAH: Midland Blackware, late 16th – 17th century. 1 sherd, 26g.
OXREWSL: Polychrome Slipware, 17th century. 1 sherd, 13g

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region.

The medieval sherds from contexts 7 and 15 are all fairly large and fresh, and appear to be reliably stratified. The topsoil assemblage includes a range of 17th century wares typical of a household of the period. It also produced a piece of post-medieval roof tile (71g, 14mm thick) which has been trimmed into a roughly circular shape (*c* 60mm diameter), possibly as a lid or a large gaming-counter.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Cntxt	OXBF		OXAM		OXDR		OXEAH		OXREWSL		OXCE		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
1			1	105	6	135	1	26	1	13	1	6	U/S
7	1	14											M11thC
15	4	70											M11thC
Total	5	84	1	105	6	135	1	26	1	13	1	6	

5.2 Animal Bone by Roxanne Blanks

A small assemblage of animal remains were recovered during a watching brief conducted at The Croft, Barnards Close, Appleford, Oxfordshire. A total of 9 fragments were recovered across four contexts (1/01), (1/07), (1/11), (1/15) with a total weight of 661g. The assemblage is well preserved and has been subject to little taphonomic damage. All of the remains were identified in accordance with Hillson (1992) and Schmid's (1972) identification manuals.

Table 2: Animal bone assemblage

Context	Identification	Skeletal element	No. of fragments	Wt (g)	Comments
(1/01)	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	Humerus	1	16g	Longitudinal peri-mortem fracture from the postero-lateral to anterior-medial

					aspect of the distal diaphysis.
		Tooth	1	41g	Deciduous tooth (evidence of exfoliated roots)
	<i>Bos</i>	Innominate	1	115g	Transverse cut across mid-innominate, longitudinal cut to the anterior aspect of the innominate in the superior-inferior orientation ending just superior to the acetabulum. 6 cut marks on the posterior inferior aspect. 10 cut marks on the lateral, inferior aspect of the innominate.
	? <i>Bos</i>	Vertebra	1	28g	?Cervical vertebra.
(1/07)	Unidentified mammal	Scapula	1	3g	3 cut marks: 2 in the superior-inferior orientation, 1 in the lateral-medial orientation.
(1/11)	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	Antler	1	437g	Multiple cut marks around the base (10). Cut from the posterior-anterior aspect across the base. 4 patches of black discolouration superior (1 large) and inferior (3 small) aspects of the tine.
	Unidentified mammal	Scapula	1	9g	
(1/15)	<i>Ovis</i>	Metacarpal	2	12g	MNI=1.

The animal bone assemblage consists of *Bos* (3/9), *Ovis* (2/9), *Cervus elaphus* (2/9) and unidentified mammal remains (2/9). *Cervus elaphus* was identified in contexts (1/01) and (1/11). Whilst *Bos* was identified from contexts (1/01) and unidentified mammal identified in contexts (1/07) and (1/15).

Table 3: Species representation of the assemblage

Species	Number of fragments	% of assemblage
Unidentified mammal	2	22.22
<i>Bos</i>	3	33.33
<i>Ovis</i>	2	22.22
<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	2	22.22

Butchery marks were identified on a total of 44.44% of the assemblage. Evidence for butchery was found on the unidentified mammal, *Cervus elaphus* and *Bos* remains. The unidentified mammal fragment which displays signs of butchery is a scapula

fragment, this fragment displays three cut marks (two in the superior-inferior orientation and one in the lateral-medial orientation). The *Bos* innominate also displays multiple cut marks, a total of 17. These include a transverse cut across the mid-innominate just below the acetabulum. A longitudinal cut to the anterior aspect of the innominate in a superior-inferior orientation stopping just superior to the acetabulum. Six cut marks on the posterior-inferior aspect and ten cut marks on the lateral inferior aspect of the innominate.

Whilst 100% of the *Cervus elaphus* remains evidence of butchery. The *Cervus elaphus* humerus displays a longitudinal cut in the superior-inferior direction with the cut travelling from the anterior to lateral aspects of the bone. This cut is characteristic of the bone being split open during the process of marrow extraction. Whilst the *Cervus elaphus* antler displays ten cut marks around the base in the lateral-medial orientation, a significant cut is also present across the antler in the posterior-anterior direction. This cut had been delivered in one blow and had not travelled completely through the antler as a small antler spur remains in the anterior aspect of the base. The cuts concentrated around the base of the *Cervus elaphus* antler suggests the antler was hacked from the deer whilst in situ. Further to this the *Cervus elaphus* antler displays four patches of black discolouration, one large (~65mm diameter) and three small (10-20mm). It is likely the patches of black discolouration are charring from burning activities. The discolouration taken together with the cut marks at the base of the antler suggest that the antler has been worked, possibly for use as an antler pick.

Table 4: Butchery marks

Species	Number of fragments	Number of butchered fragments	% of butchered remains
Unidentified mammal	2	1	50%
<i>Bos</i>	2	1	50%
<i>Ovis</i>	2	0	0%
<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	2	2	100%

In summation the small animal bone assemblage recovered from The Croft, Barnards Close, Appleford, Oxfordshire is well preserved and has been subject to little modification. The majority of the remains represent butchery waste and there is possible evidence for antler working.

5.3 Other Finds

5.3.1 Metalwork (Iron)

Two metal objects, of a combined weight of 29.1g, were recovered from topsoil (1/01). The items were very poorly preserved; a severe built-up of iron oxide was recorded, affecting the observation and the quantification of original weight and dimensions of the objects.

The complete item, weighing 24.2g and measuring 121mm in length, was identified as a possible modern clench bolt, complete with two washers at the ends, commonly used to join wooden planks (Zori 2006).

The fragmentary object, weighing 4.9g, was preserved to a maximum length of 40mm. The object was identified as a clasp with rectangular cross-section, and broadly dated to the post-medieval period.

The iron objects are not recommended for retention due to their extremely poor and unstable state of preservation.

5.3.2 Glass

A collection of 22 fragments of glass, of a combined weight of 991.9g, was recovered from topsoil (1/01). The material is extremely fragmentary and degraded; the extensive iridescence observed prevented from the positive identification of the original glass colour.

The entirety of the assemblage, dating to the post-medieval period, is composed of bottle fragments, with the exception of a single item, positively identified as window glass.

Table 7: Glass occurrence by context and type

Context	Colour	Type	No. of Items	Weight (g)	Comments	Date Range
1/01	?Olive green	Finish	3	62	Flared ring	M18 th – M19 th C
		Neck	1	11		Post-Medieval
		Body	6	78		
		Body	1	40	?Octagonal	
	Base	9	597	Push-up base	17 th C+	
	Clear	Window	1	1.9	One edge preserved	Post-Medieval

The glass fragments were not retained due to their extremely poor and unstable state of preservation.

5.3.3 Stone

One burnt stone, weighing 310.2g and measuring 80mm in length, was collected from context (1/07), fill of pit **1/06**.

5.3.4 Clay Tobacco Pipe

A small assemblage of 5 clay tobacco pipe fragments, of a total weight of 17.1g, was collected from topsoil (1/01)

Table 5: Clay tobacco pipe occurrence by context and type

Context	Type	Weight (g)	Length (mm)	Bore hole	Decoration	Date range
1/01	Bowl	2.5	26	N/A	Leaf seams	?18 th C
	Stem with spur	1.7	13	Off-centre	None	?1780-1820
	Stem	5.3	42	Off-centre		?E18 th C

		4.5	55	Centred		?L18 th C
		3.1	43	Centred		

A very limited fraction of the common leaf decoration was observed on the seam line of the single bowl fragment recovered. Its incompleteness prevented from any attempt of identification of the type; however, the general appearance suggests a relatively later date for the object, possibly to the 18th century.

The only preserved, flat spur bears some similarities to Atkinson and Oswald's type 27 (Atkinson 1969), although the complete absence of the bowl prevented from a positive identification of the type.

The plain stem fragments without diagnostic features or decorations have very little dating value; however, a slightly later dating to the 18th century is generally suggested for stems with a centred bore hole (Ayto 1994).

The stem fragments were not retained due to their extremely limited potential for further analysis.

5.3.5 Ceramic Building Material

A group of 3 ceramic building material (CBM) fragments, weighing 111.2g in total, was found in the topsoil (1/01). Only limited observations were possible due to the extremely fragmentary nature of the material.

Table 6: CBM occurrence by context and type

Context	Type	Weight (g)	Length (mm)	Thickness (mm)	Fabric	Comments
1/01	Roof tile	24.9	63	13, complete	Sandy, reddish-orange	?Post-Medieval
	?Brick	11.8	26	21	Sandy, red	Undetermined
	Tile	74.5	140	14, complete	Gritty, light pink-greyish	?Modern

Only a broad date to the post-medieval period can be suggested for the roof tile fragments, as the same manufacturing technique was used until the 19th century; also good quality roof tiles were reused over long period of times.

It is not recommended to retain the ceramic building material fragments due to their extremely limited potential for further analysis.

6 DISCUSSION

The very firm compaction and light coloured or 'bleached' appearance of fill (1/11) in pit 1/10 is typically seen in early prehistoric features and its truncation by medieval pit 1/08 is consistent with this. The location of the antler in pit 1/10 suggests it was

likely thrown or fell down the western side of the pit. Cut marks around the base and burnt areas around the crown provide evidence for potential fashioning and firing (strengthening) of an antler pick. Its general morphology, size, weight/balance also support this. Although the exact representation of its use is uncertain, it indicates the potential for activity associated with antler picks as a technological process typical of the Neolithic period. The discolouration of fill (1/11) taken together with the *in situ* probable antler pick provides strong evidence for pit 1/10 being of an early prehistoric date.

Of the five other pits on site, pottery types refine the date of pits 1/06 and 1/14 from within around AD1050 to the late 14th century. The fresh condition of the pottery in pit 1/06 indicates good preservation in well stratified deposits to secure this date. The similarity of fills within all five of these pits together with spot dating suggests them to be close in date from the Early to Mid-Medieval period. The fact that they are all sealed by an undisturbed subsoil which underlies medieval material also supports this. The relationship of 1/06 cutting 1/04 indicates one example of these pits fully silting up prior to the creation of another suggesting relatively low scale domestic activity in the local vicinity. Occasional butchered domestic animal bone fragments further support this.

It is likely that pottery from AD1200 – 1600 in the disturbed topsoil (1/01) originates from the underlying subsoil (1/02). The presence of most finds in topsoil (1/01) is probably the result of disposed material from the adjoining main road.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief
Written scheme of investigation
The project report
The primary site record

Physical record

Finds

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Oxfordshire County Museum Services under accessional number OXCMS: 2016.80.

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