



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**THORPE FARMHOUSE, THORPE STREET,**

**ASTON UPTHORPE, OXFORDSHIRE**

**NGR SU 5590 8615**

*On behalf of*

**Courtney Stewart**

**NOVEMBER 2016**

**REPORT FOR** Courtney Stewart  
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## **SUMMARY**

*This document represents an investigation of the potential for archaeological remains on land variously called The Old Stable or Cow Shed, that is located in the curtilage of Thorpe Farmhouse which is located in the village or hamlet of Aston Upthorpe (NGR SU 55900 86150). An area 9.5m wide x 17m was excavated to the natural chalk surface located over the former position of the Old Stable. Cut into the chalk were three un-dated features, a single posthole and one or possibly two linear boundary features.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site, variously called The Old Stable or Cow Shed, is located in the curtilage of Thorpe Farmhouse which is located in the village or hamlet of Aston Upthorpe (NGR SU 55900 86150). The geology is West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation which is a chalk sedimentary bedrock created 94 to 99 million years ago in the Cretaceous ([mapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html](http://mapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html)) and the site lies at approximately 68m to 70m aOD.

### 1.2 Planning Background

South Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for dismantling of curtilage shed, construction of new swimming pool and pool house with associated ancillary spaces, with reuse of existing shed roof timbers in new construction (P14/S1892/HH). Due to the potential for the work to disturb archaeological deposits conditions have been attached to the permission:

*6. The applicant, or their agents or successors in title, shall be responsible for organising and implementing an archaeological watching brief, to be maintained during the period of construction/during any groundworks taking place on the site. The watching brief shall be carried out by a professional archaeological organisation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation that this has first been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

*Reason: To secure the protection of and proper provision for any archaeological remains in accordance with Policy CSEN3 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2027 and Policies CON11, CON13 and CON14 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011.*

*7. Once the watching brief has been completed its findings shall be reported to the Local Planning Authority as agreed in the Written Scheme of Investigation, including all processing research and analysis necessary to produce an accessible and useable archive and a full report for publication.*

*Reason: To enable an appropriate level of archaeological investigation of the area including excavation and recording, post excavation analysis and the publication of results in accordance with Policy CSEN3 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2027 and Policies CON11, CON13 and CON14 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011.*

### 1.3 Archaeological Background

Thorpe Farm appears to be the original location of the manor as it is known that Thorpe Farm was held under a renewed lease from Cirencester Abbey dated to 1533 when a John Slade held the site (VCH 1923, 280-91).

A building record was made of the barn by JMHS (2014). This also includes the history of the site and the nearby area and will not be repeated here.

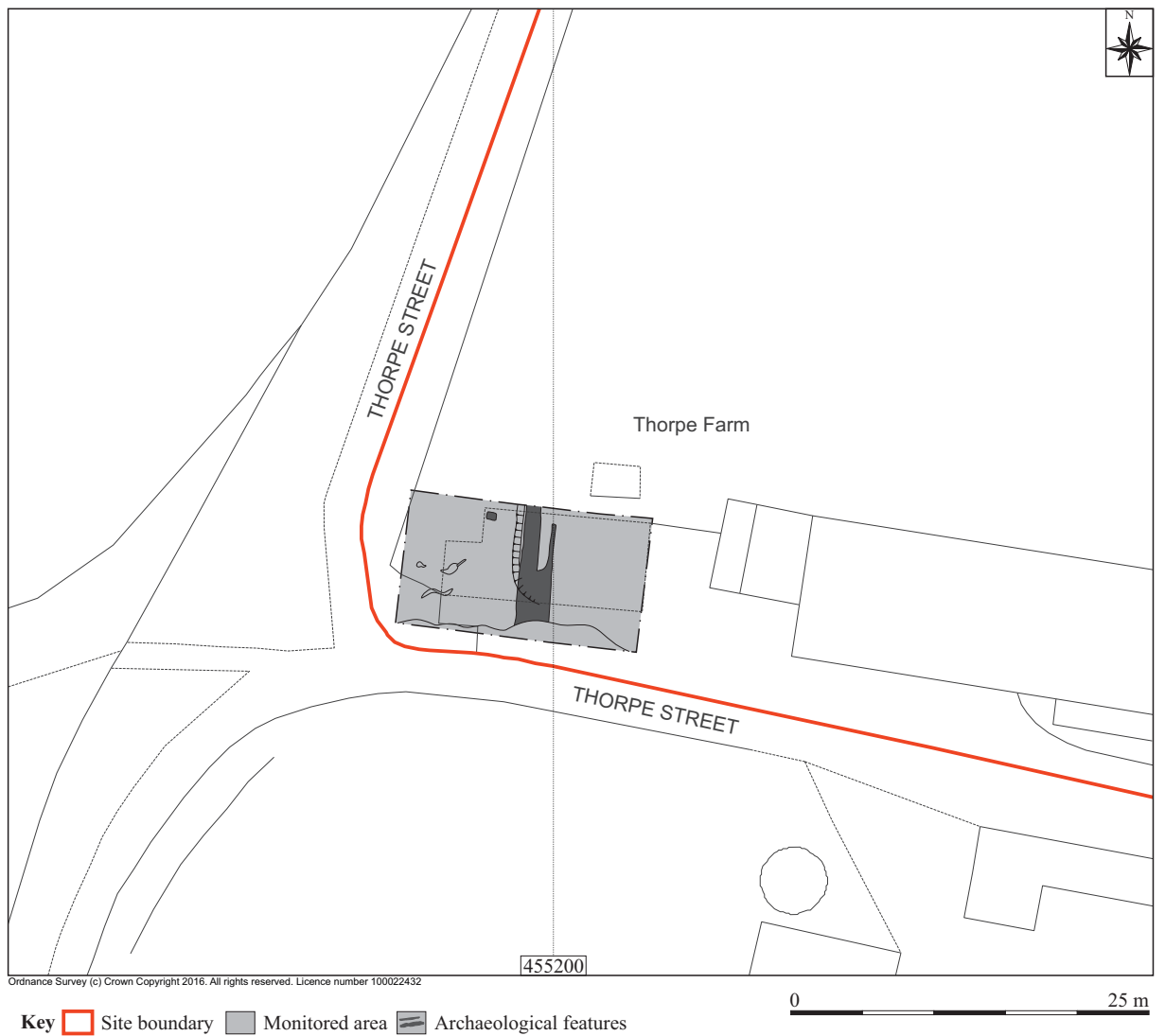
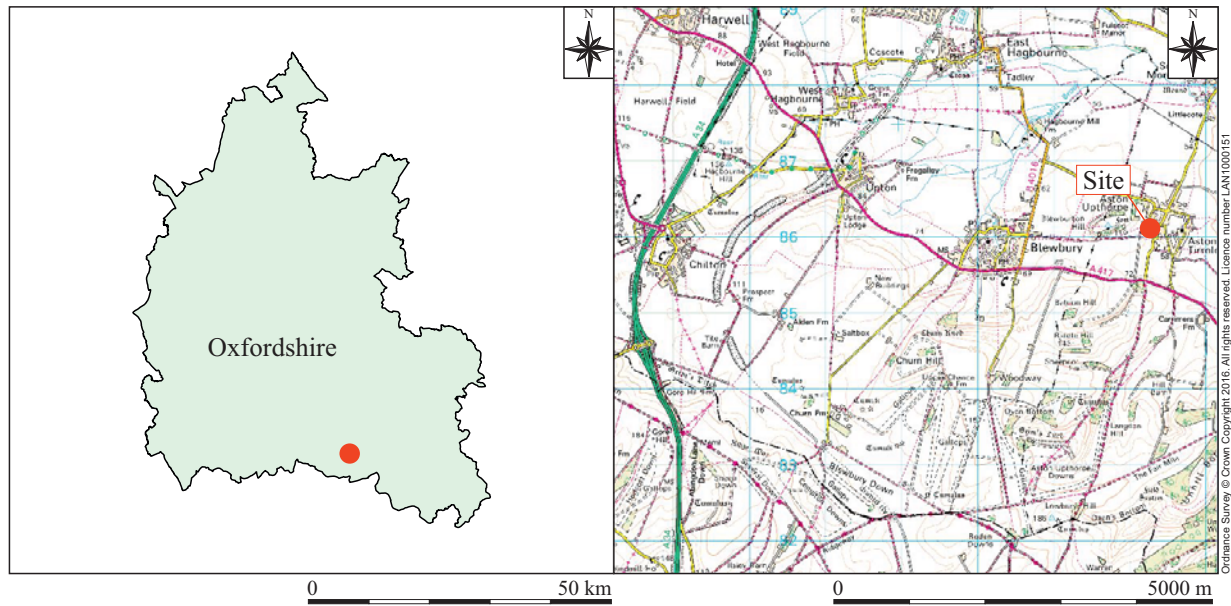


Figure 1: Site location

## **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 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 medieval manorial complex.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation (JMHS 2016) agreed with Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team, the archaeological advisors to the Vale of White Horse District Council.

### **3.2 Methodology**

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.

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of any significant groundwork that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains. This was for excavation for the ground reduction.

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

The resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned, especially for finds relating to the medieval period.

An area 9.5m wide and 17m long was stripped by a 15T machine excavator using a ditching bucket to expose the top of the natural chalk within the footprint of the development (Fig. 1) that was located on an east facing gentle slope. The trench was located over where the Old Stable Barn was situated (now demolished).

## **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.

The excavated trench (Figs. 1 & 2) consisted of a natural chalk surface (1000), overlain by a 0.2m thick layer of a yellowish grey silty clay (1001), a subsoil possibly representing a former ploughsoil or colluvial layer. Overlying this layer was an up to 0.7m thick layer of grey / brown silty clay (1002), a topsoil.

Cut into the natural chalk and overlain by subsoil (1001) were two linear ditches and one posthole, together with modern root disturbed areas along the southern and western extent of site (Fig. 2).

Posthole 1003 (Plate. 1) was situated 2m west of ditch 1005 (Fig. 2). It was 0.46m wide, 0.7m long and 0.2m deep, rectangular in shape with vertical sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill of a brown / grey silty clay (1004) that contained no finds.



Plate. 1 Posthole 1003

Linear ditch 1005 (Plate. 2) was situated in the centre of the site (Fig. 2) and was orientated north / south. It was 1m wide, 8m long and 0.2m deep with moderate – steep sloping sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill of a brown / grey silty clay (1006) that contained no finds.



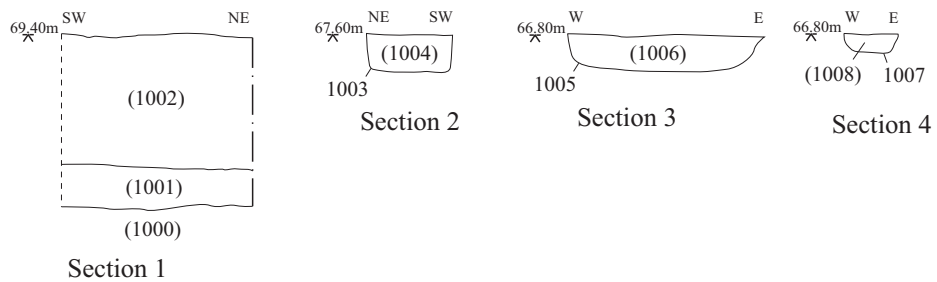
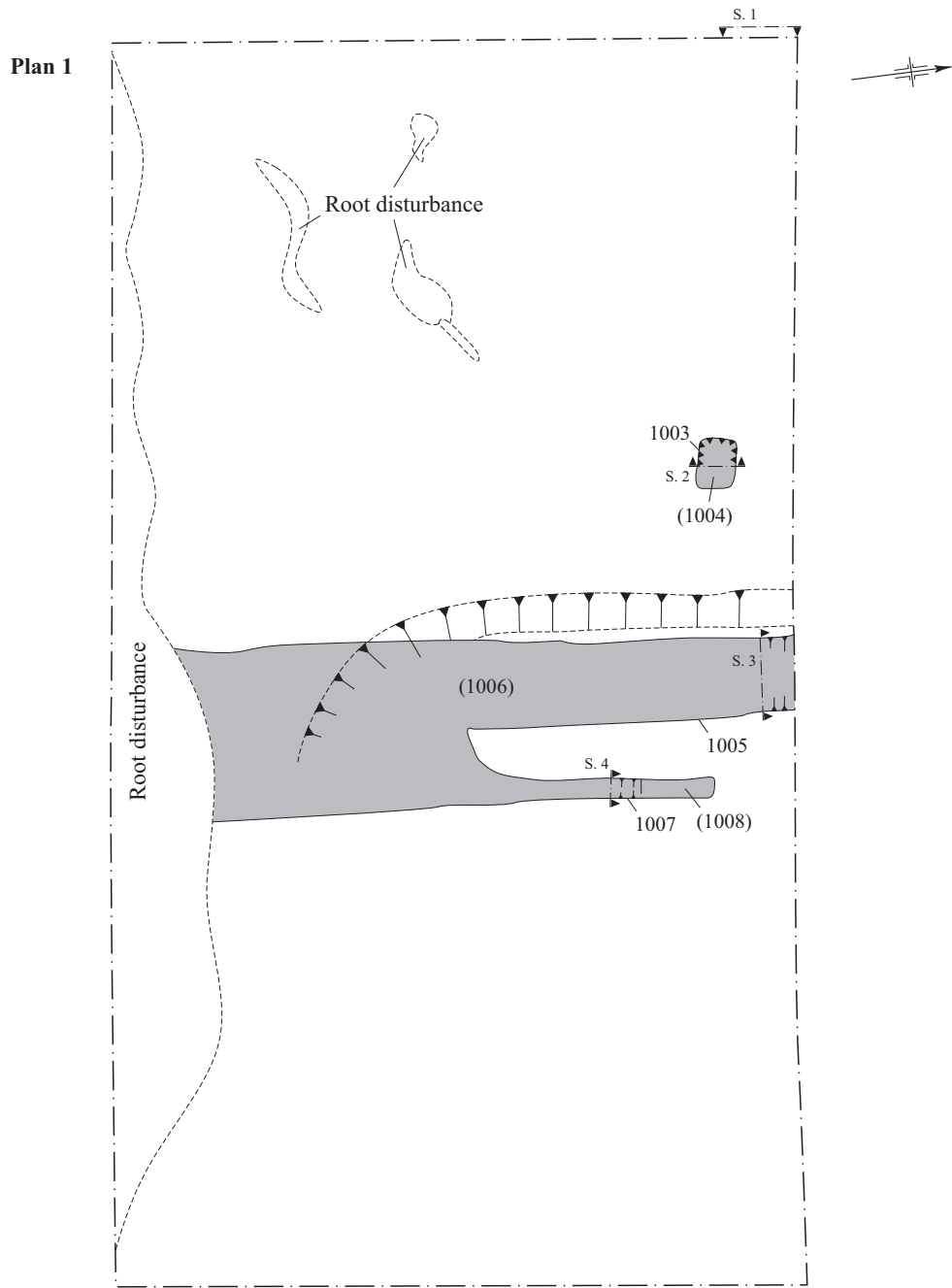


Plate. 2 Ditch 1005

Linear gully 1007 (Plate. 3) was situated immediately east of ditch 1005 (Fig. 2) and was orientated north / south and terminated to the north. It was 0.3m wide, 6.8m long and 0.1m deep with moderate – steep sloping sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill of a brown / grey silty clay (1008) that contained no finds. No relationship with ditch 1005 was discernible.



Plate. 3 Ditch 1007



Key  Site boundary  Archaeological features

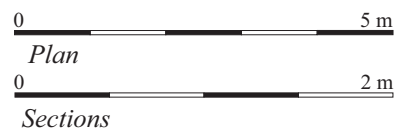


Figure 2: Plan and sections

## 5 FINDS

No finds were recovered from any of the features, subsoil or topsoil on the site.

## 6 DISCUSSION

A barn structure dated to the early to mid-18<sup>th</sup> century was previously located over the area of the excavated trench. The three undated features identified within the trench must then pre-date or are contemporary with the structure. Posthole 1003 was probably a result of modifications to the barn structure. Ditches 1005 and 1007 form a north / south land boundary and probably pre-date the barn and could represent part of the development of the farm from the Medieval to the Early Post-Medieval periods. It is possible that the gully is part of the ditch that has been truncated and only part on the east side has survived. The break of slope shown on Figure 2 would explain this. Alternatively it could be part of the original boundary or a recut that has only partly survived truncation. It was not possible to section the feature(s) at the south end due to root disturbance and the method of the groundworks.

## 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

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Oxfordshire Museum Resource Centre with the museum accession number OXCMS : 2016.57.

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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

John Moore Heritage Services 2014 *Building Recording on the Old Stable Barn, Thorpe Farmhouse, Aston Upthorpe, Oxfordshire*. Unpublished report

John Moore Heritage Services 2016 *Thorpe Farmhouse, Aston Upthorpe, Oxfordshire. Archaeological Watching Brief Written Scheme of Investigation* Unpublished report