



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

SANDLEFORD FARM, NEWTOWN ROAD (A339),

NEWTOWN, BERKSHIRE RG20 9BB

NGR SU475645

*On behalf of
The Historic Environment Consultancy*

NOVEMBER 2016

REPORT FOR	The Historic Environment Consultancy 38 Elvendon Road Goring-on-Thames Oxfordshire RG8 0DU
PREPARED BY	Stephanie N. Duensing
ILLUSTRATION BY	Autumn Robson
EDITED BY	John Moore
AUTHORISED BY	John Moore
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ENQUIRES TO	John Moore Heritage Services Hill View Woodperry Road Beckley Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ Tel: 01865 358300 Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk
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SUMMARY

This document represents an investigation of the potential for archaeological remains on land at Sandleford Farm, Newtown Road (A339), Newtown, Berkshire RG20 9BB (NGR SU475645). The watching brief was intended to address the concerns of the archaeological advisors West Berkshire Council that that the ground-works might encroach on rumoured archaeological remains reported by a local resident to have been in the vicinity of planned work.

The fieldwork was carried out on the 22nd November 2016 and consisted of monitoring a machine excavated trench through the area thought to have a high potential to include an historic icehouse. The area exposed no such structure, only a possible two-course deep brick footing for a late 19th century outbuilding.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location

The development site is located at Sandleford Farm, just off Newtown Road (A339), Newtown, Berkshire RG20 9BB (NGR SU475645) (Figure 1).

The site lies at approximately 115m AOD and the underlying geology is London Clay Formation – Sand.

1.2 Planning Background

West Berkshire Council granted planning permission to redevelop the site to provide provision of 9 residential units (barn like), two 2 bed, four 3 bed, and three 4 bed. Due to the archaeological and historical importance of the surrounding area a condition was attached to the permission requiring no development shall take place within the application area until the applicant has secured the implementation programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which was submitted by the applicant and approved by the Planning Authority. This was to ensure that any archaeological features and finds identified were adequately investigated and recorded, in line with policy CS19 in the West Berkshire Core Strategy [2006 to 2026]. The Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by The Historic Environment Consultancy.

1.3 Archaeological Background

As outlined in The Historic Environment Consultancy WSI and Heritage Statement (2012, the purpose of this evaluation was to ascertain the presence or absence of an ice house:

Duncan Coe, West Berkshire County Archaeologist, suggested that an ice house might be present on the development area at Sandleford Farm (Fig. 2). This possibility has been investigated by the following means:

- 1. Discussion with the person who reported the presence of the ice house*
- 2. Checks of aerial photographs held in the National Monuments Record*
- 3. Checks of historic maps and documents*
- 4. Visual inspection of the ground*
- 5. Amateur investigations by the owner of the neighbouring property*
- 6. Archaeological monitoring of the area in question during machine excavation.*

No ice house is shown near the farmyard in aerial photographs or on the historic mapping. However on the 1877, 1911 and 1934 Ordnance Survey plan there are structures which are the right size (c. 7m across) and shape for ice houses, located adjacent to Sandleford Priory (Fig. 3).

Two ice houses in close proximity is very rare, making it more unlikely the structures depicted are ice houses. The shape indicates that if they are ice houses, they were not covered, either by earth or thatch, at the time they were recorded by the Ordnance Survey, and presumably were disused or recently completed at this point. They are adjacent to a track which leads to the fish pond - a source of ice in

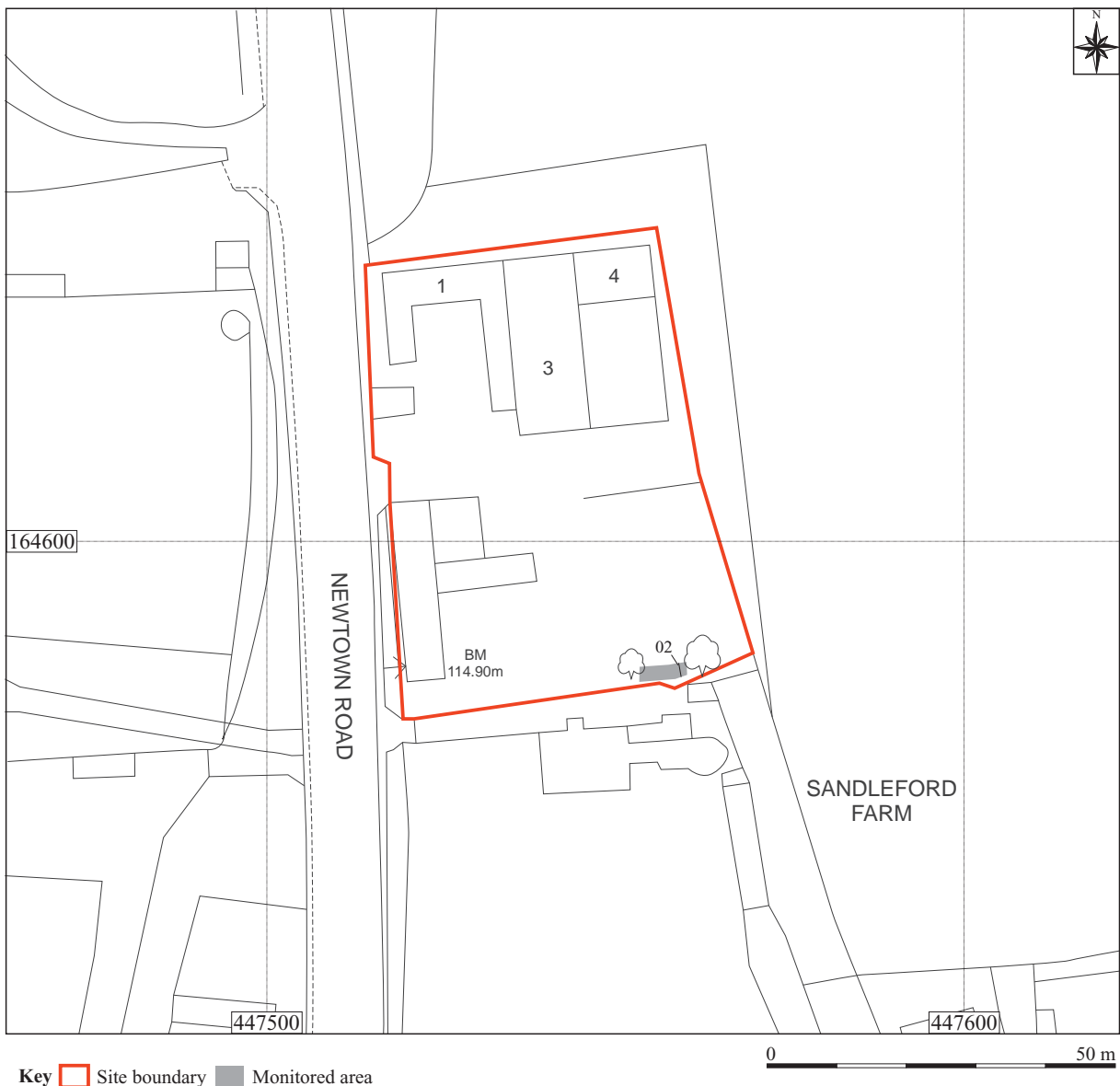
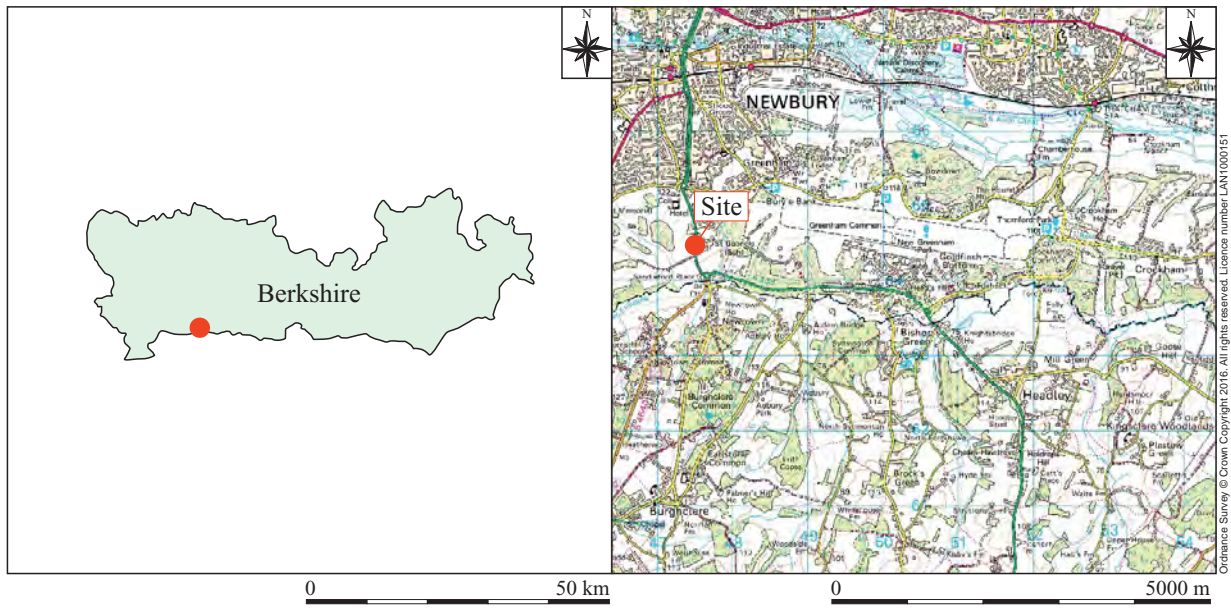


Figure 1: Site location

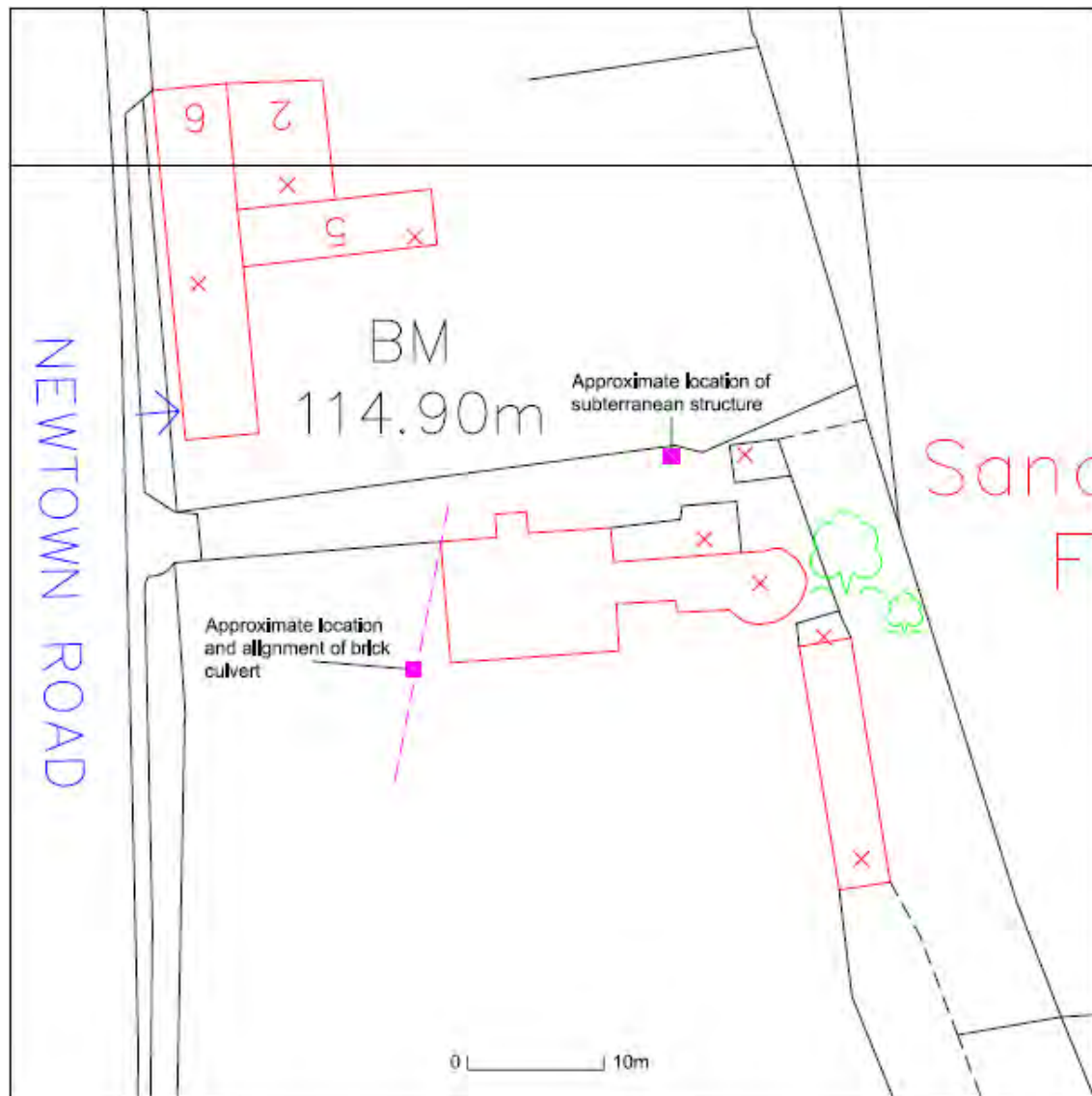


Figure 2 : Locations of culvert and domed structure

1:500, locations approximated by Duncan Coe (Historic Environment Consultancy 2016, 8).

the winter - however as stated above, proximity to an ice source is not a necessity (The Historic Environment Consultancy, 2016: 4-7).

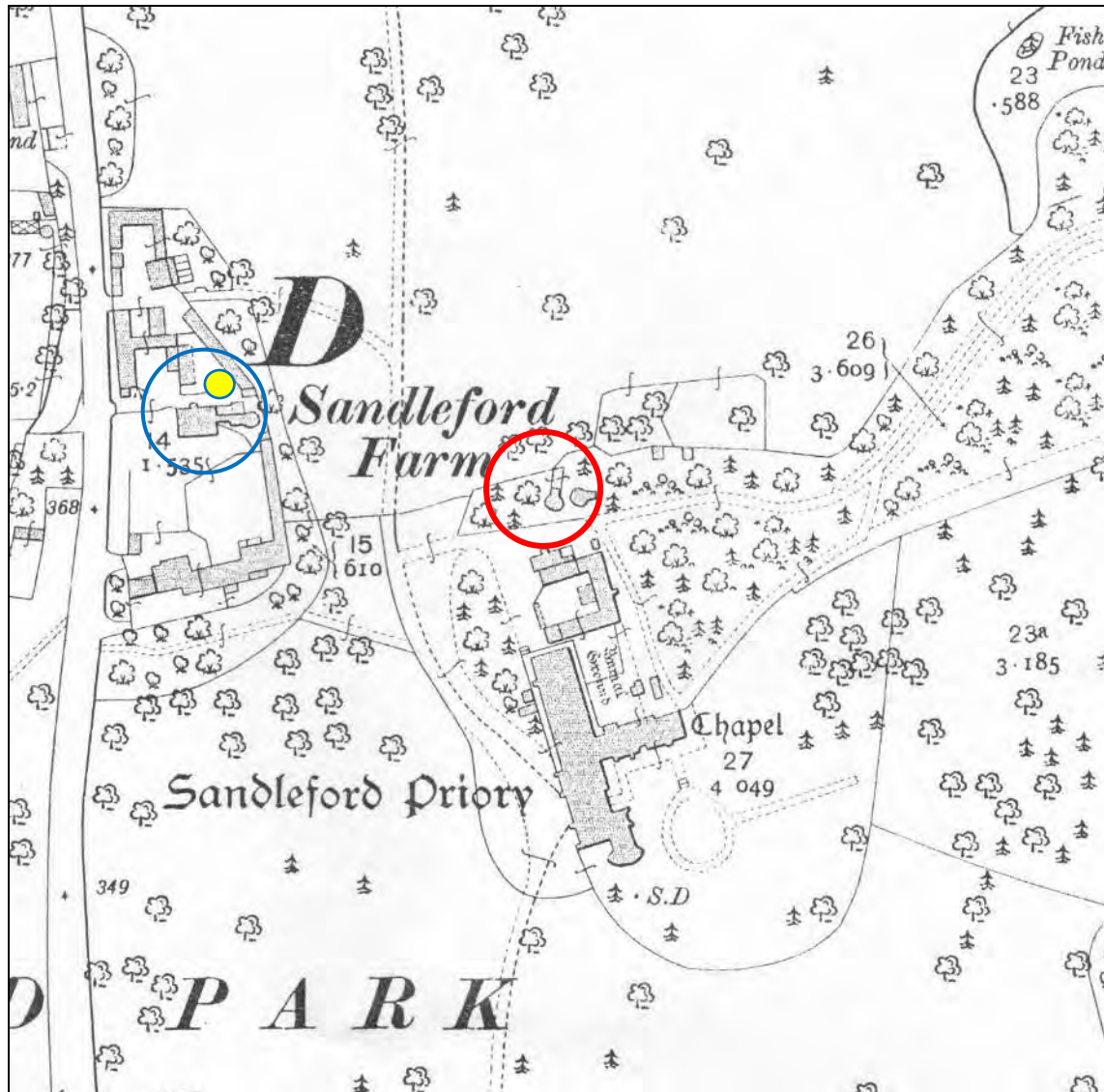


Figure 3 : 1911 Ordnance Survey plan (not to scale)
Farmhouse circled in blue and ice houses circled in red - trench location in yellow (approximate).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To determine if the remains of a post-medieval ice house exist on the development area.
- To assess the condition, survival, quality and significance of any archaeological remains found.
- If archaeological remains are found, further more comprehensive examination may take place, if they will be disturbed by the development.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation (The Historic Environment Consultancy (2012) agreed with the archaeological advisors to the West Berkshire Council. The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

3.2 Methodology

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for the visit, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was also produced to show the negative presence of any structural elements. The resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned, especially for finds relating to 19th century use of the site.

4 RESULTS

The fieldwork was carried out during a single visit on the 22nd November 2016. The ground-works at the time of the visit consisted of the mechanical excavation of a single trench.

The natural geology consisted of compact pale yellowish brown sandy clay and stone, London Clay. A possible brick foundation footer [2] composed of two courses of brick extended NW-SE (Fig. 1) across the trench in the easternmost end. It was determined to be related to a structure rather than a boundary wall due to the presence of what appeared to be the floor with concrete surface still apparent (Plate 1).

No evidence that this was part of a larger subterranean structure was present. The trench could not be extended to the east any further due to a protection order on a Yew tree in the abutting property which may have sustained damage to the root



Plate 1: Foundation footer [2] with potential flooring circled in red.



Plate 2: Trench 1.

system if there had been any nearer encroachment. Similarly, the trench could not be extended west any further due to the presence of another large tree which had not been scheduled to be removed by the development. The trench was bounded to the south by the property boundary and to the north by the presence of live water and gas services. As such, the area of potential was as fully tested as aforementioned limitations allowed.

No deposits or features answering to the description of a 19th century subterranean icehouse were discovered at this location. Trench 1 (8.2m x 1.8m) was excavated to a depth of 1.1m until the sterile natural soils were revealed (Plate 2). Modern curbing and asphalt made up the surface, below which modern levelling rubble was noted (including modern, disarticulated, red brick and plastic accordion drainage piping) to a depth of 0.33m. Below this modern levelling deposit was a layer comprising grey-brown slightly clayey silt with 5% content of small stone and the very occasional small fragment of brick. This layer overlaid part of the foundation footer [02]. It is possible that where deposit (03) does not overlie [02] this is where the lowest part of the wall superstructure survived. This would mean that the wall had been built on a spread foundation. Deposit (03) was 0.31m thick and did not contain any dateable finds. It had the appearance of an old topsoil, which was probably the topsoil at one time. Natural was uncovered at 0.64m. A representative section of Trench 1 was photographed and drawn.

5 FINDS

No archaeological finds were recovered. Late 19th century brick and modern plastics were the only material culture noted but not retained. The bricks which comprised the brick footer were comprised of those commonly used in the mid-19th century, 225mm × 107mm × 67mm (Hammond 1990: 30).

6 DISCUSSION

The foundation footer [2] probably relates to an outbuilding on the grounds of the farm in the late 19th or early 20th century. This building may well be the structure shown on the 1880 Ordnance Survey map aligned along the NW-SE rear property line (see Figure 3). The lack of finds is largely due to the modern resurfacing during the construction of the carpark in recent years. The absence of the possible icehouse or any subterranean structure would indicate that (if still extant) it falls outside the property boundary in question.

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 West Berkshire Council Museum Service.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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

Hammond, M, 1990. *Bricks and Brickmaking*, Shire, Rickmansworth.

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