

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**48 PLANTATION ROAD, OXFORD,**

**NGR SP 508 074**

*On behalf of*

*Riach Architects*

**AUGUST 2016**

**REPORT FOR** Riach Architects  
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**REPORT ISSUED** 16<sup>th</sup> August 2016

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**JMHS Project No:** 3178  
**Site Code:** OXPR 15

Archive Location: The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Oxfordshire Resource Centre with the accession number OXCMS:2015.10

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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at 48 Plantation Road, Oxford (NGR SP 508074). It involved the monitoring of trenches for; a rear extension attached to the southern side of the property that revealed late post-medieval pits, a foundation trench for an extension on the eastern side of the property that was devoid of any archaeological features. The extension on the western side of the property was not archaeologically monitored.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The development site is located at 48 Plantation Road, Oxford (NGR SP 508074) and lies at approximately 63m OD. The property is a domestic dwelling and garden and the underlying geology is 2nd (Summertown-Radley) Gravel Terrace Deposits.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Oxford City Council granted planning permission for the erection of a part single, part two storey extension to the side elevation and two storey extension to the rear elevation. 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**

This site lay within an area of the Summertown Radley 2nd gravel terrace which is known to encompass an extensive landscape of Middle Neolithic to Early Bronze Age funerary monuments and subsequent landscape of dispersed Iron Age and Roman rural settlements with associated field systems and burials. A number of burials and finds of Roman and medieval date previously have been recorded within a 120m radius of the site. Also in the 19<sup>th</sup> century one, or possibly two, skeletons were found at the rear of St Philip and St James School 118m away (UAD No 677). In 1871 a Roman quern was recovered when foundations were dug for a house 40m away (UAD Event No 676). Furthermore a watching brief 56m away at Woodstock Road in 1991 recorded an in-filled quarry pit with medieval roof tile (UAD event No 593).

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

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

- To identify and record any archaeological remains revealed by the ground works, paying particular attention to the potential for prehistoric and Roman remains.
- Where applicable the report will refer to the city, county and regional period based resource assessments and research agendas.

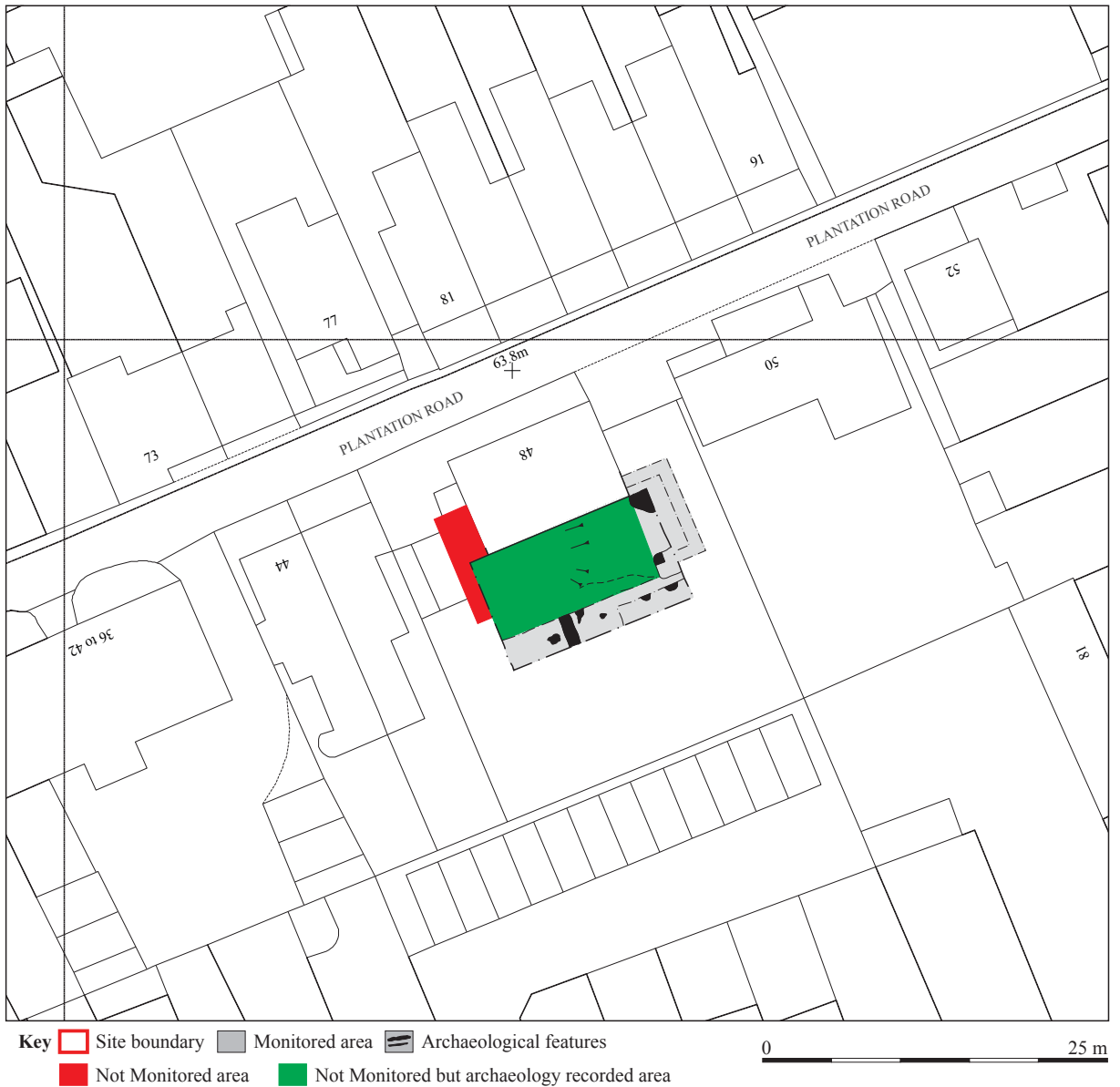
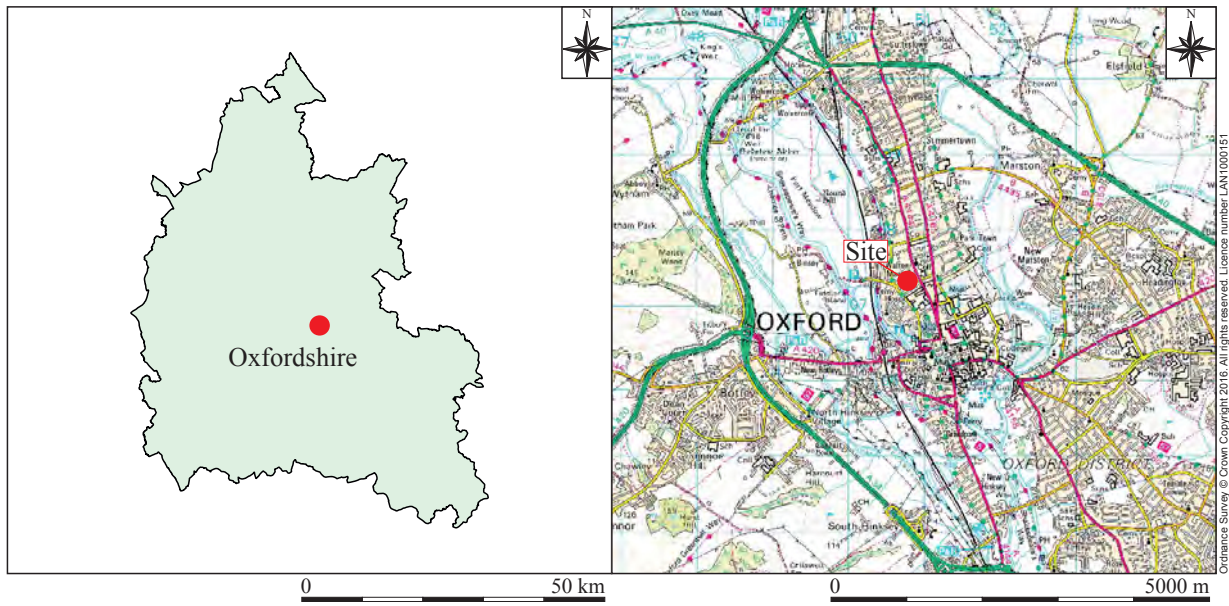


Figure 1: Site location

### **3 STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxford City Council Archaeological Officer.

A detailed watching brief was to be undertaken by an experienced archaeologist during ground works. This included any surface stripping/ground reduction, excavation for foundation trenches where necessary, and excavation of service/drainage trenches.

The Oxford City Planning Archaeologist was contacted before and during the watching brief in order to allow him to monitor the work and to arrange site visits as appropriate.

An experienced Project Officer undertook the site monitoring under the overall direction of John Moore MifA.

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

#### **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.

The resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned and detected for metal finds, especially for finds relating to the Prehistoric, Roman and Medieval and later periods.

In October 2015 groundworks for the extension to the rear of the property initially commenced without an archaeologist present. Upon arrival to the site a trench for the basement was partly excavated (Fig. 1 & Plate. 1). The trench was 14m long, 8m wide along the northern extent and 7m long along the southern extent. The trench was 3m deep in the northwest corner area measuring 8m long and 5m wide, 1m deep in the southeastern corner and 1.5m deep in the northeastern corner and had an access slope in the southwestern corner. The base and sides of the trench in the eastern and southern extents were then cleaned by a 7.5 tonne mechanical excavator to reveal partly truncated features; these were then excavated and recorded where safe to do so.

In January 2016 further groundworks involved the excavation of a foundation trench alongside the eastern side of the existing property (Fig. 1 & Plate. 2). The trench was 0.8m wide and 0.8m deep, it extended 3.5m westwards and 7.3m southwards.

Regular contact was maintained with the site manager by telephone over the next few months regarding progress on the site until the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2016 when an un-scheduled site visit was made. Upon arrival it was apparent that the extension on the western side of the existing property (Fig. 1 & Plate. 3) had already been constructed with no

archaeological monitoring of the foundation trench. The site manager was not present on site so a photographic record of the construction work done to date was undertaken.



Plate 1. Working shot of basement excavation



Plate 2. Foundation trench on eastern side of building





Plate 3. New extension constructed on western side of building

#### 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.

There was a 0.7m thick layer of a greyish brown silty loam (1001) garden soil overlying the archaeological features that were cut into the natural gravels (1000). The natural gravels did not show any sign of the supra-natural layer that normally overlies the natural gravels in this area of the town, suggesting there has been previous truncation of the gravels before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This sequence was present within the basement trench and the eastern foundation trench.

Pits 1002 and 1004 were located along the eastern baulk of the trench (Fig. 2 & Plate. 4), partially excavated by the machine.

Pit 1002, (Fig. 2 & Plate. 4) was sub-circular in shape and truncated by the rear wall of the dwelling, it measured 1.8m wide, 1.5m long, +1m deep and had a steep side. No further excavation was undertaken due to safety concerns. It was filled with a single fill of brown silty clay, (1003), that contained one sherd of 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery and a single fragment of a modern glazed tile.

Pit 1004, (Fig. 2 & Plate. 4) was sub-rectangular in shape, aligned east / west and measured 1.9m wide, 1.5m long and 1m deep with vertical sides and a concave base. It contained three fills; the lowest fill, a grey / brown silty clay, (1005) was 0.35m thick and contained frequent flecks of charcoal and one fragment of 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery. The middle fill was a brown silty clay, (1006), that was 0.65m thick and



contained no finds, and the upper fill consisted of a 0.3m thick dump of redeposited natural gravels, (1007) in the northern side of the pit and contained no finds.



Plate 4. Pits 1002 and 1004

Pits 1008 and 1010 were located along the southern baulk of the trench (Fig. 2), and were partially truncated by the machine.

Pit 1008, (Fig. 2) was sub-circular in shape, 0.6m wide, +0.5m long and 0.35m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. It was filled by a brown silty clay, (1009), that contained two sherds of 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery.

Pit 1010, (Fig. 2) was sub-circular in shape, 0.8m wide, +0.5m long and 0.25m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. It was filled by a brown silty clay, (1011), that contained no finds.

Vegetation rooting 1012, (Fig. 2) was irregular in shape, 0.4m wide and 0.5m long and was filled by a brown silty clay (1013) that contained no finds. The feature was recorded in plan only.

Tree-hole 1014, (Fig. 2) was irregular in shape, 0.7m wide, 1m long as seen and 0.25m deep with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. It was filled by a brown silty clay (1015) that contained one fragment of slate roof tile.

Ditch 1016 (Fig. 2 & Plate. 5) was orientated north – south, 0.7m wide, 2m long and 0.2m deep with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. It was filled by a grey / brown silty clay (1017) that contained a 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century flower pot saucer.

Tree-hole/vegetation rooting 1018, (Fig. 2 & Plate. 5) was irregular in shape, 0.7m wide and 0.8m long and was filled by a brown silty clay (1019) that contained no finds. The feature was recorded in plan only.

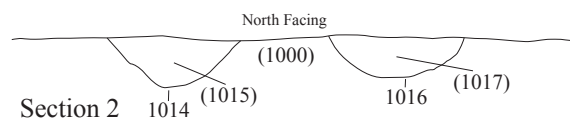
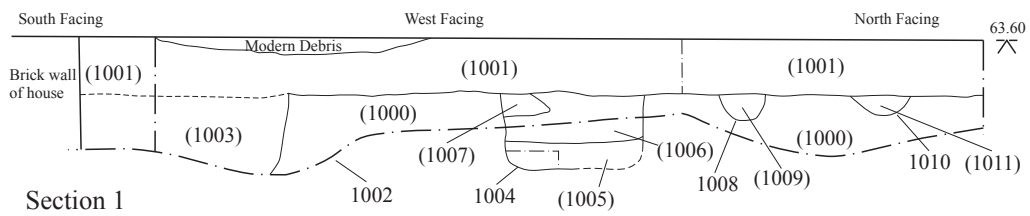
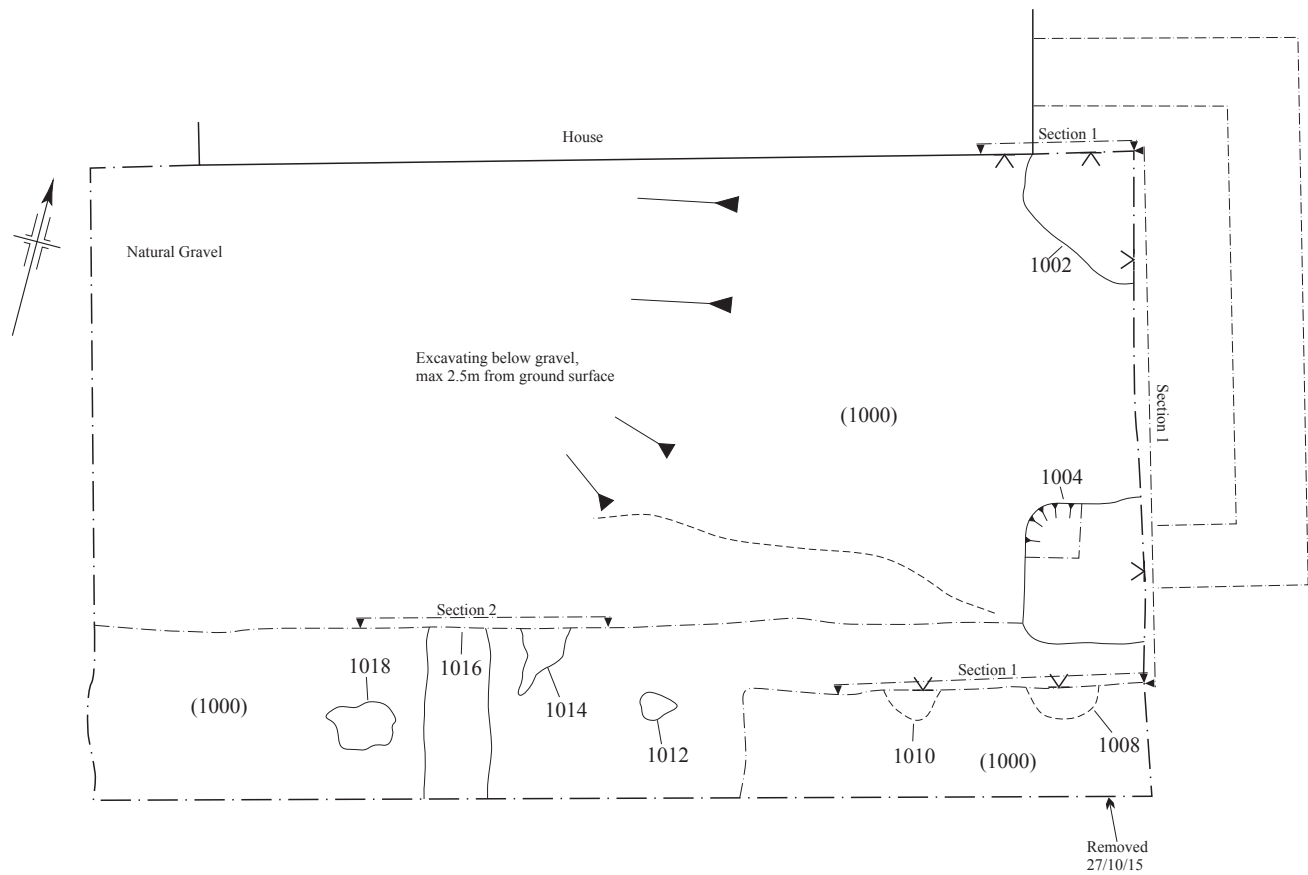


Figure 2: Plan and Sections



Plate 5. Tree-hole 1014 and ditch 1016

## 5 FINDS

*By Pierre Manisse*

### Pottery

A small assemblage of modern pottery was collected during this investigation. The finds were counted, weighed and recorded by context. None of the artefacts are recommended for retention.

Context	Qty.	Description	Weight (g)	Datation
1003	1	Whiteware plate (full profile)	66	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup>
1005	1	Stoneware with inscription "Blacking bottle" at its base, preserved height = 8.9cm, diameter =	200	19 <sup>th</sup>
1009	2	TPW	15	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup>
1017	3	Almost complete unglazed flower pot saucer (full profile), orange fabric, diameter = 14.5cm	287	19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup>

Table 1. Pottery table

### Tile

A single fragment of glazed white tile weighing 7 gr was collected from context (1003). It was identified as a modern kitchen or bathroom tile and not retained.

### Slate

One small fragment of slate weighing 16 gr was collected from context (1015). The object is part of a slate roof tile, dating to the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century. It is not recommended for retention.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

Excavation of the basement trench revealed two large pits 1002 and 1004, two small pits 1006 and 1008, north – south ditch 1016 and three tree-holes/vegetation rooting areas. Where finds were recovered they all dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century. The north – south linear ditch 1016 could represent an internal division of the garden during the 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century and the pits were possibly utilised as waste pits.

The foundation trench on the eastern side of the property was devoid of archaeological features.

The excavation of the foundation trench on the western side was not monitored.

## **7 ARCHIVE**

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Oxfordshire Resource Centre with the accession number OXCMS: 2015.10

## **8 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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

John Moore Heritage Services, 2015 *48 Plantation Road, Oxford Archaeological Watching Brief Written Scheme of Investigation* (unpublished report)