



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

NORTHWAY & MARSTON FLOOD ALLEVIATION

SCHEME, OXFORD, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 53600 08150 & SP 5390 08460 centred

*On behalf of
Oxford City Council*

APRIL 2017

REPORT FOR Oxford City Council
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SUMMARY

This document represents an investigation of the potential for archaeological remains on land adjacent to Maltfield Road, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 53578 08243, centred). There were two areas under investigation - Area A, Northway Community Field and Area B, which is adjacent to Court Place Farm Nature Park. Both Area A and B were shown to have been extensively built up and no archaeological features were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location

The monitored sites were located in two areas of the Northway and Marston Flood Alleviation Scheme (Figure 1). Site A, Northway Community Field, is a gently sloping sports field bordered by Copse Lane, Westlands Drive, Maltfield Road and partly by Dora Carr Close. Site B is an area of sloping space next to Court Place Farm Nature Park (NGR SP 53578 08243, centred).

Site A lies at approximately 70.1m aOD and Site B lies at roughly 62.4m aOD. Site A is situated on Upper Oxford Clay while Site B is landslip over 1st Terrace Gravel deposits.

1.2 Planning Background

Oxford City Council granted planning permission for 6/01320/CT3 & 16/01549/CT3 Phases 1 & 2 of the Northway and Marston Flood Alleviation Scheme. 16/01320/CT3 refers to Phase 1 comprising installation of landscape bunds at Northway Community Field (Site A) to create flood storage area, road re-profiling at Westlands Drive and Saxon Way and flood resilience measures at Oxford Boxing Academy. 16/01549/CT3 Phase 2 comprises the creation of a flood storage area adjacent to Court Place Farm Nature Park (Site B), channel realignment along a section of Peasmoor Brook and installation of a bund at Peasmoor Piece (Site C). Oxford City Council Design, Heritage and Specialist Services Team produced a *Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (Brief). 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 sites are within an archaeologically poorly studied part of Oxford that has the general potential for prehistoric remains and the more specific interest regarding the extent of the 1st-4th century Roman field system previously identified at Barton Park to the north. Evidence for a Roman field system north of the Oxford ring road has been recovered during the Oxford Bypass Project (OAU 2000) and during recent excavations at Barton Park (Oxford Archaeology forthcoming).

In the medieval and post-medieval periods these sites that were monitored would have been located in agricultural land within the parish of Headington. The character and date of the historic route way that crossed east-west through the southern part of the Northway Community Field, linking Old Marston and Headington (as shown on c. 1830s 2" Surveyor's Map) was considered of some local interest.

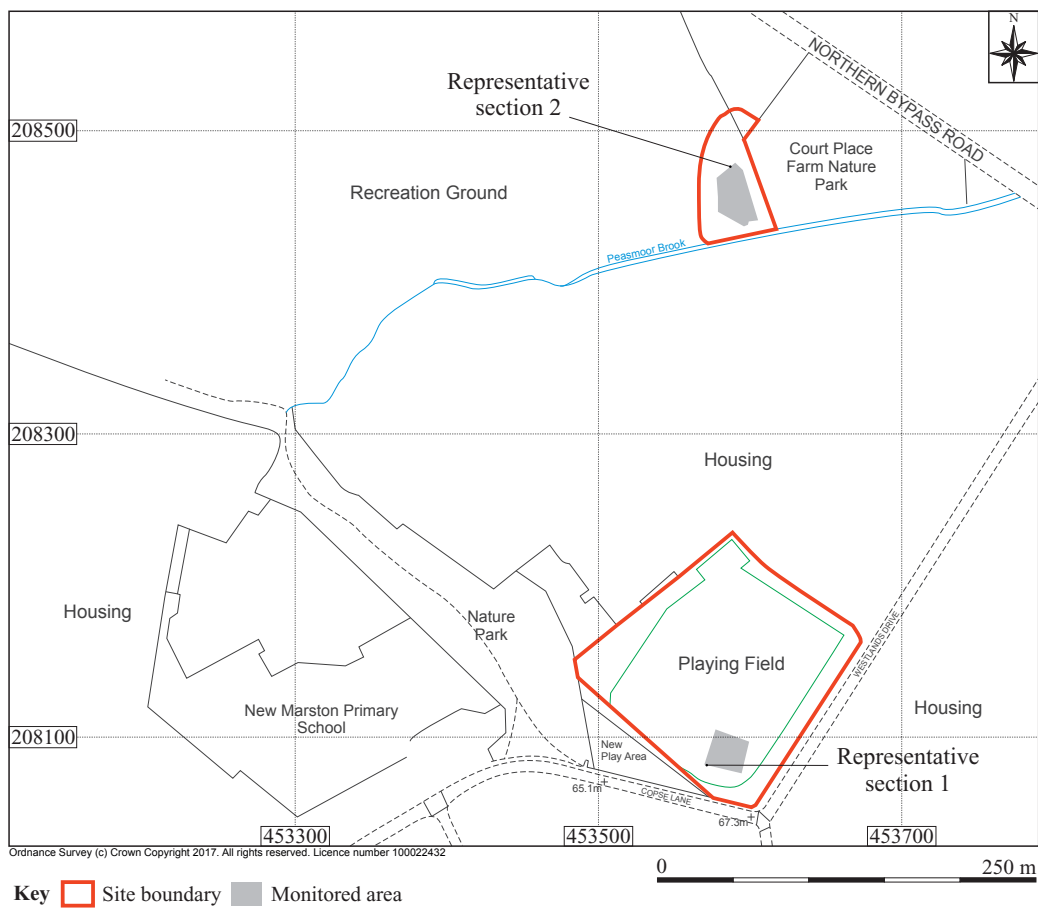
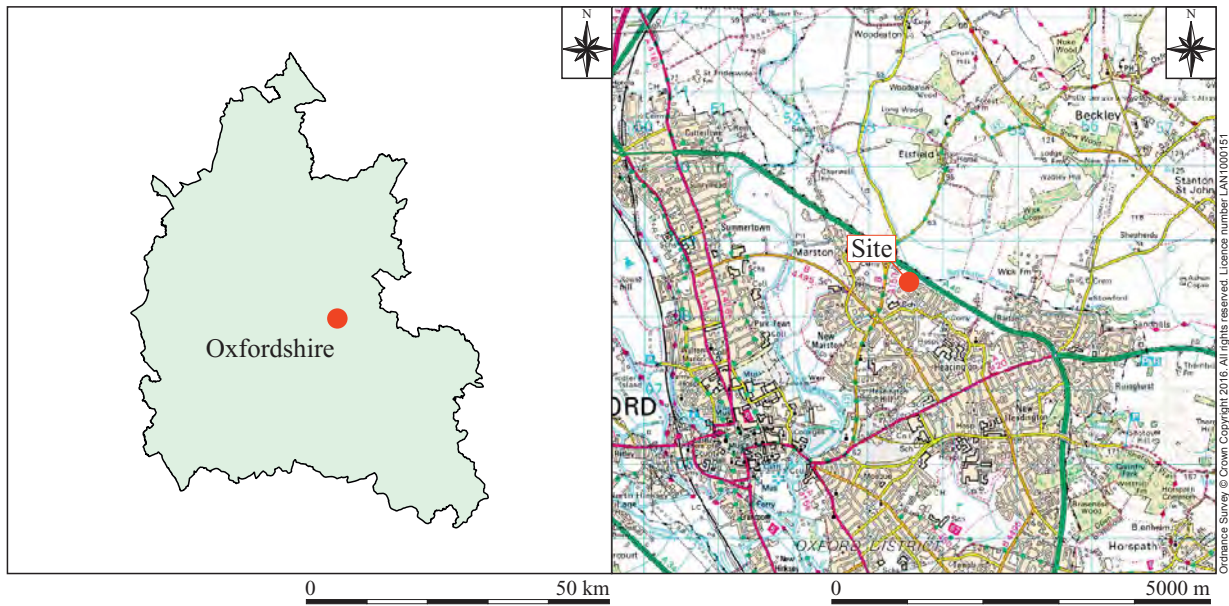


Figure 1: Site location

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To record any significant archaeological remains revealed by the ground works.

In particular:

- To record evidence for the patterns of Roman field ditches and any associated features. These would be interpreted with reference to the known archaeology of the area.
- In addition particular care will be taken to identify, investigate and record any roadside ditches associated with the post-medieval or earlier track from Old Marston to Headington present in the southern part of the Sports Field.
- Where applicable the report on the results will refer to the city, county and regional period based resource assessments and research agendas.

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 Design, Heritage and Specialist Services Team,

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

3.2 Methodology

An intermittent watching brief was undertaken during ground works for Phase 1 (Site A) where modern made ground had appeared to be quite extensive. An initial visit was made by the archaeologist to ensure there was agreement regarding the right level to strip to any potential archaeological horizon. The monitoring of Phase 2, Site B also was comprised of an intermittent watching brief during the reduction of the area by the contractor, using a toothless bucket.

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. No stratified artefacts were observed except for concentrations of modern building material in unstratified deposits. The resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned, especially for finds relating to Medieval or Roman activities. No unstratified post-medieval or more recent materials were kept.

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.

Area A showed to be comprised of approximately 700mm of made-up ground underlying and covering a large number of interconnected ceramic field drains (modern). There was a turf layer (01) which was up to 10mm thick, and comprised of a mid to dark brown loam. The turf was over a thin layer of pea gravel (02), approximately 100-130mm thick, regular shaped < 20mm in diameter, which was intentionally laid to act as drainage for the sod. Under that was the made-ground deposit (03), which was mid yellowish brown, sandy clay and was 130-500mm (a total 370mm thick). Natural (04) was comprised of light to medium yellowish grey clay, mottled with mid blueish grey clay (eventually solely blueish grey at deepest levels), and was seen at least 1.55m deep. The majority of the area was excavated only to a total depth of 800mm, but the SW corner was over machined to the total depth of the proposed works, 1.55m (see Plate 1) in order to demonstrate the full extent of the layers impacted.



Plate 1 – Representative section Area A, facing SW.

Area B was comprised of approximately 1.2m of made-up ground covering the whole of the area and coming down on to a dark layer which appeared to be a buried surface with evidence of soil contamination (see Plate 2). This was the limit of the excavation for this area therefore no natural deposits were encountered. There was a topsoil layer (05) which was up to 220mm thick, and comprised of a mid-greyish brown loam. Under that was the extensive made-ground deposit (06), which was mid yellowish brown, sandy clay mottled with pockets of more dense clay and occasional rubble. This deposit stretched from 0.22-1.5m (a total 1.33m thick). The limit of excavation (07) was comprised of dark to medium blueish grey clay, mottled with patches of mid reddish yellow clay, from 1.5-1.6+m. The area was excavated only to the total depth of the proposed works, and as such natural geology was not encountered.



Plate 2 – Representative section Area B, facing NW.

5 FINDS

All stratified artefacts were to be collected and retained except for concentrations of building material where only a representative sample was deemed necessary.

Beyond the Victorian and modern, unstratified debris within the made-ground deposits, no artefacts or archaeological features or artefacts were observed or retained from either area.

6 DISCUSSION

It was clear that extensive levelling and drainage initiatives had already been implemented historically in the area under investigation and that the likelihood of archaeological remains surviving anywhere in the area of impact was unlikely. In Area A, it was confirmed that ground levelling and irrigation measures had obscured any archaeological evidence which might have existed, though no evidence of any such archaeological element was found. The network of drains crossing the area appear to have been laid during an extensive resurfacing episode which built up the area with redeposited soils (03) and modern landscaping measures in the way of turf and pea gravel, (01) and (02) respectively. The natural geology (04) was directly below these deposits and the drainage.

In Area B, it was also confirmed that extensive ground building measures had been implemented within relatively recent times (mid-20th century); no evidence of any archaeological feature was found. The extensive resurfacing episode built up the area with redeposited soils (06) and modern landscaping measures in the way of topsoil (05). The limit of excavation revealed a deposit of dark blueish grey soil (07) which appeared to be a buried surface of potentially contaminated soil. This area was compared visually to the stratigraphic composition on the western half of the field which was also being reduced but had been written off in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), and the areas were notably similar in make-up.

When taken with the mid-20th century debris, this is in line with the area being built up at the same time of the construction of the John Radcliffe Hospital in the 1970s, opening the first phase of the new development in 1972 (Gough 1979: 33). The made surface was mixed with modern (20th century) rubbish such as hosepipes and tires, so it is likely that the contamination layer is associated with this period of extensive redevelopment to the area.

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 Museums Store under accession number OXCMS: awaited.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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

Gough, M. H. "The 'Radcliffe' hospitals, Oxford" *British Medical Journal*, 1979, 2, 33-35.