

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

THE ONION PATCH, KENNINGTON ROAD,

KENNINGTON, OXFORDSHIRE

SP 5234 0230

On behalf of

Mrs. Campbell

OCTOBER 2003

REPORT FOR

Mrs. Campbell
C/o RSA Architects
Lombard House
West St. Helen Street
Abingdon
Oxfordshire
OX14 5BE

PREPARED BY

John Moore

FIELDWORK

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ENQUIRES TO

John Moore Heritage Services
Long White Cloud
Waterperry Road
Holton
Oxfordshire OX33 1PW

Telephone/Fax 01865 876637

Email: jmhs99@hotmail.com

Site Code;
JMHS Project No:

KNBB 03
1352

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Summary

The watching brief revealed evidence for at least two phases of pits on the site. The earliest is broadly dated to the Saxo-Norman period and probably functioned as cesspits. The second phase, which is undated, appears to have been for sand quarrying and pre-date the present cottage on the site.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Fig. 1)

The development site is located to the north east of the junction of Kennington Road and Cow Lane in Kennington (NGR SP 5234 0230). The Church of Saint Swithun lies approximately 50m to the south. The site lies at c. 66m OD. The site is currently utilised for residential purposes.

1.2 Planning Background

The Vale of White Horse District Council granted planning permission to subdivide the existing Barn and Byre into two dwellings, extend the Onion Patch and the Studio and erect two new dwellings and garages (KEN/4295/2). A condition was attached to the permission, requiring that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during groundworks that may have an impact on any archaeological remains present. The Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (CAS) prepared a Brief for such a watching brief. The work was carried out to a *Written Scheme of Investigation* that was agreed with the CAS on behalf of the Vale of White Horse District Council.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The development site lies within an area of archaeological potential. Flint artefacts of Mesolithic date have been found in the area. A spread of Romano British pottery and a boxwood comb of that period were found in 1946 to the east of the site. The presence of wasters suggests a pottery kiln in the area. Just to the south is the church hall that is built on or close to the site of an earlier chapel of ease that was dedicated to Saint Swithun. Although the earliest documentary reference for this is 1538 the construction was earlier.

2. AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the work were, as laid out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*:

- to make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.
- In particular to record and date
 - any prehistoric activity

- any remains relating to the Romano British finds to the east of the site
 - any medieval and post-medieval settlement on the site
-
- to make public the results of the investigations.

3. STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the CAS. 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.

The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

The development was split into two distinct phases of work.. The first phase involved work associated with the cottage, The Onion Patch, which fronts Kennington Road. This involved the construction of two extensions to the cottage, a new boundary wall between the associated garden and the access to the Barn & Byre to the north, and a new garage. The second phase will include an extension to The Studio, construction of a new garage/workshop, and the construction of two new houses at the east end of the site. This report is concerned solely with the results of the first phase of work.

An archaeologist monitored the excavation of the footings for the following: the two extensions to The Onion Patch, the new boundary wall to the north of The Onion Patch, the new garage for The Onion Patch, and a pit for the new staircase within the cottage.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [] indicate features i.e. walls, pit cuts; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material. Fills were assigned the same number as the cut for the pits in order to keep abreast of the recording as the foundation trenches were excavated.

The geology was sand containing very large blocks of sandstone (02). This was highest adjacent to Kennington Road and under cottage. The top of the sand gently sloped down eastwards on the north and central part of the site. To the south of the cottage the sand sloped southwards very steeply. It had probably been dug away in this area.

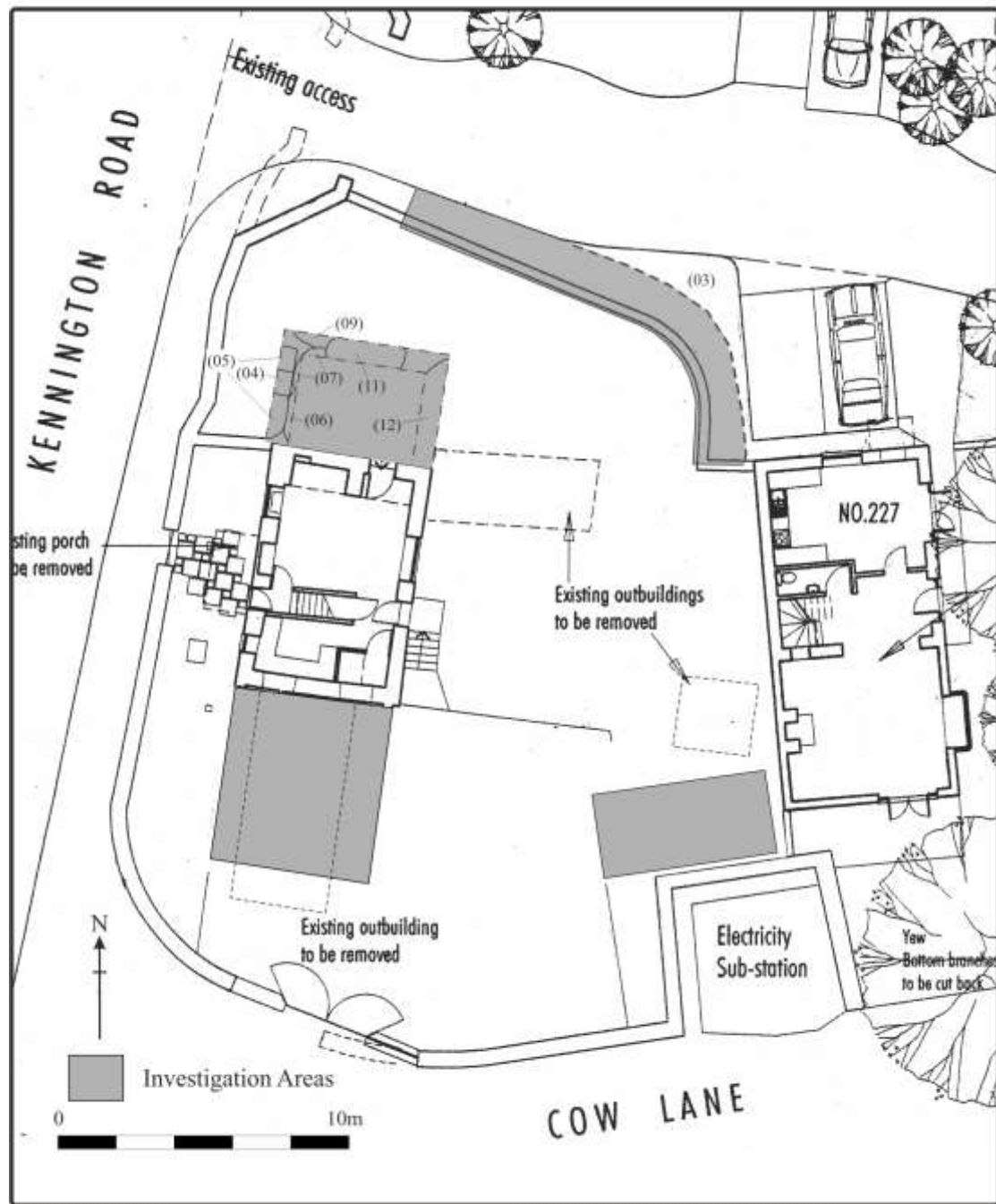


Figure 2. The Onion Patch – Pit Locations

Several features were seen cut into the top of the sand (Fig. 2). All these were within the footprint of the new north extension. All the pits (except pit 05) exceeded the depth excavated for the new footings.

At least two phases of pits were present on the site. One of the earliest phase was pit 09 seen in the northern foundation trench. This was a sub-circular pit at least 800mm deep with an estimated diameter of just over 2m. It had a near vertical side and was filled by alternate layers of and mid grey brown silty sand with the occasional charcoal fleck. No finds were recovered from the fill. Pit 09 was cut by pit 07, which again was sub-circular in shape, *c.* 1.7m in diameter and at least 800mm deep. The side of the pit was at an angle of *c.* 60° from the horizontal. Again the pit was filled with layers of sand and other material, of which the major part was a mid brown grey sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks and the very occasional piece of sandstone. The south west part of the pit had more lenses of sand. A fragment of animal bone was recovered from the feature but was not retained. To the south of pit 07 was a further pit [06]. The relationship of the two pits could not be ascertained. Pit 06 was sub-circular in plan and at least 1.7m in diameter and at least 1100mm deep. It was filled with alternate layers of sand and mid grey brown silty sand with the occasional charcoal flecks, similar to pit 09. The last two pits (067 & 06) are dated to the Saxo-Norman period (see below).

Later than pit 07, and cutting it, was a large pit [11] from the second phase. This was sub-circular in shape with sides of 60°. It was 2.7m in diameter and at least 800mm deep. The lower backfill material comprised yellow grey (60:40) very sandy silt with the occasional pebble, while the upper fill was pale yellow grey (80:20) sand with occasional small sandstone pieces. South east of the last pit was a large pit [12] that was at least 3.7m in diameter and at least 800mm deep. This sub-circular pit had a near vertical side to the north. The pit extended under the north east corner of The Onion Patch. Layers of mid yellow brown very slightly silty sand, and layers of pale yellow sand with a very slightly silty content, filled pit 12. All layers contained moderate amounts of medium sized pieces of sandstone. No finds were seen within the fills of these two pits, which were considered to be quarry pits.

In the west foundation trench was a further pit [05] lying immediately to the north west of the cottage. This was later than, and truncated, pit 06. The pit was sub-rectangular in plan with vertical sides, and was 3.3m wide (north-south) and 800mm deep. It had a flat base. An 18/19th century glass bottle was seen in the pit fill in the side of the foundation trench. Cut into the top of the backfilled pit 05 was a 800mm wide wall [04] constructed from limestone and orientated east west. This was seen in the west side of the west foundation trench. It did not extend right across the trench, apparently ending in line with the west wall of the cottage. The wall footing survived 5-6 courses high (770mm). The limestone blocks, of average size 200x150x100mm, were set in a loose very silty sand.

Above the wall foundation was a layer of orange brown very slightly silty sand containing the occasional stone and brick rubble (08). This was 400mm thick and appeared to have been deposited in order to build up the front garden alongside the street frontage. Further from the street frontage the natural sand and features cut into it were covered by topsoil (01) composed of loose mid grey brown silty sand with 2% by

volume of small pebble. 18/19th century pottery was seen within this material. This material was 200-400mm thick, increasing in thickness to the south and east.

In the extreme north east corner of the site, part of an earlier drive into the site leading to the Barn and Byre, and the Studio was seen. This comprised a compact layer (03) of small cobbles (40-50mm in diameter) some 20-30mm thick (Fig. 2). This was laid on a 'dirty' interface with the underlying sand (02). Above the cobbles was a layer of silty sand some 60mm thick over which was laid the make-up and tarmac surface of the present drive. The cobbled surface was 150mm below the present drive surface at the extreme north east corner of The Onion Patch site. It was only seen in the edge of the foundation trench for the new boundary wall at the north end of the site, and it occurred under the present drive. It was seen sweeping round towards the front of The Studio.

The cottage had a concrete floor under which was a 250mm thick layer of moderately compact pale brown slightly silty sand with 30% small limestone pieces (13). This material overlaid the natural sand. Deposit 13 may have been a make-up layer for the original floor within the cottage.

No features were present in foundation trenches for the new garage or the boundary wall. The westernmost 5m of the footing trench for the boundary wall at the north end of the site was not inspected.

5 FINDS

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 3 sherds with a total weight of 56g. Two sherds (11g) were noted in context 6 and one (45g) in context 7.

All three sherds were are Oxford fabric OXAC, Cotswolds-type ware, (Mellor 1994), and dated AD975-1350, although the material does not become common until the 11th century, so a broad Saxo-Norman date for both contexts is probably the most appropriate.

6. CONCLUSIONS

At least two distinct phases of pit are present on the site. The first phase includes pits 09, 07 and 06 of which the last two are dated to the Saxo-Norman period. Pit 09 is earlier than pit 07 and can be included in this general broad date range. The filling type of all three pits – alternate layers of sand and other material – suggests their function was as cesspits. However their position so close to the road would be unusual unless the road alignment has changed, or that cottages set within very small plots occupied the corner of Kennington Road and Cow Lane. No evidence for buildings of this date was seen on the site. It is possible that an earlier cottage occupied the area of The Onion Patch but the present building may have destroyed all evidence for this, although only a relatively small area under the floor was investigated.

The second phase of pits is undated. These are much larger than those of the first phase and are considered to be caused by digging for sand. The sand is of exceptional quality and would have been used in making mortar amongst other uses.

The present cottage (The Onion Patch) post-dates the pit digging for sand. Further removal of sand took place after the construction of the cottage. This took place on the south side of the cottage and was probably for the access from Cow Lane and an outbuilding on the south side of the cottage.

Pit 05, lying immediately outside the north west corner of the cottage, may belong to the second phase of pits or may be contemporary with the cottage. This pit contained a bottle of 18/19th century date, which is of the same date range as pottery seen in the garden topsoil (01). Wall 04 is later than this pit and presumably relates to the cottage and the front garden. The build up of the front garden (08) may have been in response to successive resurfacing of Kennington Road raising the street and pavement levels.

At one time the entrance into the property to the north (Barn and Byre) was cobbled.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

IFA 1994, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*, Institute of Field Archaeologists.

Mellor, M, 1994 Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region *Oxoniensia* **59**, 17-217

APPENDICES**APPENDIX 1 – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

Context	Type	Description	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Finds	<u>Date</u>
01	Layer	Topsoil	0.20-0.04	-	-	-	Modern
02	Deposit	Natural	-			-	-
03	Layer	Surface	0.02-0.03	0.50	9.0	-	-
04	Masonry	Wall	0.77	0.80	0.40	-	
05	Feature	Pit	0.80	3.30	-	-	
06	Feature	Pit	1.10	1.70	-	-	
07	Feature	Pit	1.10	1.70	-	-	
08	Layer	Build up	0.40	1.00+	4.00+	-	
09	Feature	Pit	0.80+	1.90	-	-	
10	Same as 07						
11	Feature	Pit	0.80+	2.70	-		
12	Feature	Pit	0.80	3.70	-	-	
13	Layer	Make-up	0.25	2.00+	1.50+	-	