



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

**VILLIERS PARK, SCHOOL LANE,
MIDDLETON STONEY, OXFORDSHIRE**

SP 5331 2346

On behalf of

Mr J Watkins

AUGUST 2007

REPORT FOR	Mr. J Watkins Villiers Park School Lane Middleton Stoney Bicester OX25 4AW
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Summary

A watching brief was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services during groundworks for a new replacement house. A relatively high number of medieval pottery sherds suggests a building in the vicinity of the development dating possibly from the 11th century, although the majority of the pottery dates to after the beginning of the 13th century, through to the late 15th or early 16th century. Two pits found could be contemporary.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site of the development is situated on the south west side of the village immediately to the west of Villiers Park (NGR SP 5331 2346). The flat site was formerly part of the garden attached to the existing dwelling. The underlying geology is Great Oolitic White Limestone Formation and the site lies at approximately 100m OD.

1.2 Planning Background

Cherwell District Council granted planning permission for the demolition of the existing house and the construction of a new dwelling in March 2006 under application number 06/01416/F. This application was withdrawn and a new application 06/01979/F was submitted in August 2006 with amendments dated March 2007. Due to the archaeological potential of the site a condition was attached requiring an archaeological watching brief to be maintained during the period of groundworks. This was in line with PPG 16 and Cherwell District Local Plans.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site of the proposed development lay within an area of archaeological potential. The site is located 100m east of the deserted medieval village of Middleton Stoney (PRN1088; NGR SP 532 234), which was demolished during the expansion of the park in 1824-5. The plot is also located 200m north of a medieval castle, built in the late 1100s (PRN1148; NGR SP 5321 2324). A Roman farmstead building with stone walls was discovered below the earthworks of the castle during excavations in the early 1970s. It was considered likely that archaeological deposits associated with the medieval castle, village or later parkland may have been encountered during this development.

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 exposed during the groundworks
- The particular aim will be to record and characterise any medieval remains.



3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record throughout, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

3.2 Methodology

The topsoil had been stripped off prior to an archaeologist attending site. The resulting surface was carefully examined in order to retrieve any finds from the underlying material. The spoil heap also was scanned for artefacts. An archaeologist was present during the excavation of the foundation trenches.

Following the mainly negative results it was agreed with the County Archaeological Services that monitoring of the service trenches was not required.

4 RESULTS

The natural geology of Great Oolitic White Limestone Formation comprised of limestone with pale grey-green clay and pockets of grainy orange-brown clay (03). This was overlain by a mixed deposit of slightly clayey loam, loamy clay and up to 20-30% limestone pieces (02). This was 150mm thick and is considered to be a cultivation or ploughsoil. It contained sherds of pottery ranging from the 11th to late 15 or early 16th century. The overlying topsoil (01) was *c.* 150mm thick and consisted of mid-dark brown-grey slightly clayey loam.

Two pits were cut into the natural and were sealed by the subsoil (02). Sub-circular pit [04] was *c.* 2m in diameter and 650mm deep. The upper sides were at 45° while the lower sides were at 20° from the horizontal and the base was slightly rounded. The lower 400mm thick fill of the pit was pale grey-yellow clay with 10% by content of limestone while the upper fill was pale-mid brown clayey silt. The pit contained a sherd of pottery dating from sometime in the 11th to mid 14th century.

The other pit [05] was *c.* 1.5m in diameter and 650mm deep. This had sides of 70° and a slightly rounded base. It was filled by 200mm of pale orange slightly silty clay tipping in from the north side covered by 280mm of dirty pale grey-yellow clay and finally pale grey-yellow and orange-brown clay and silty clay mix. The pit also contained the skeleton of an animal (/sheep or goat). No dating evidence was forthcoming from the pit and as it was sealed by the subsoil the pit may well be of medieval date although the animal bone survives in exceptionally good condition.

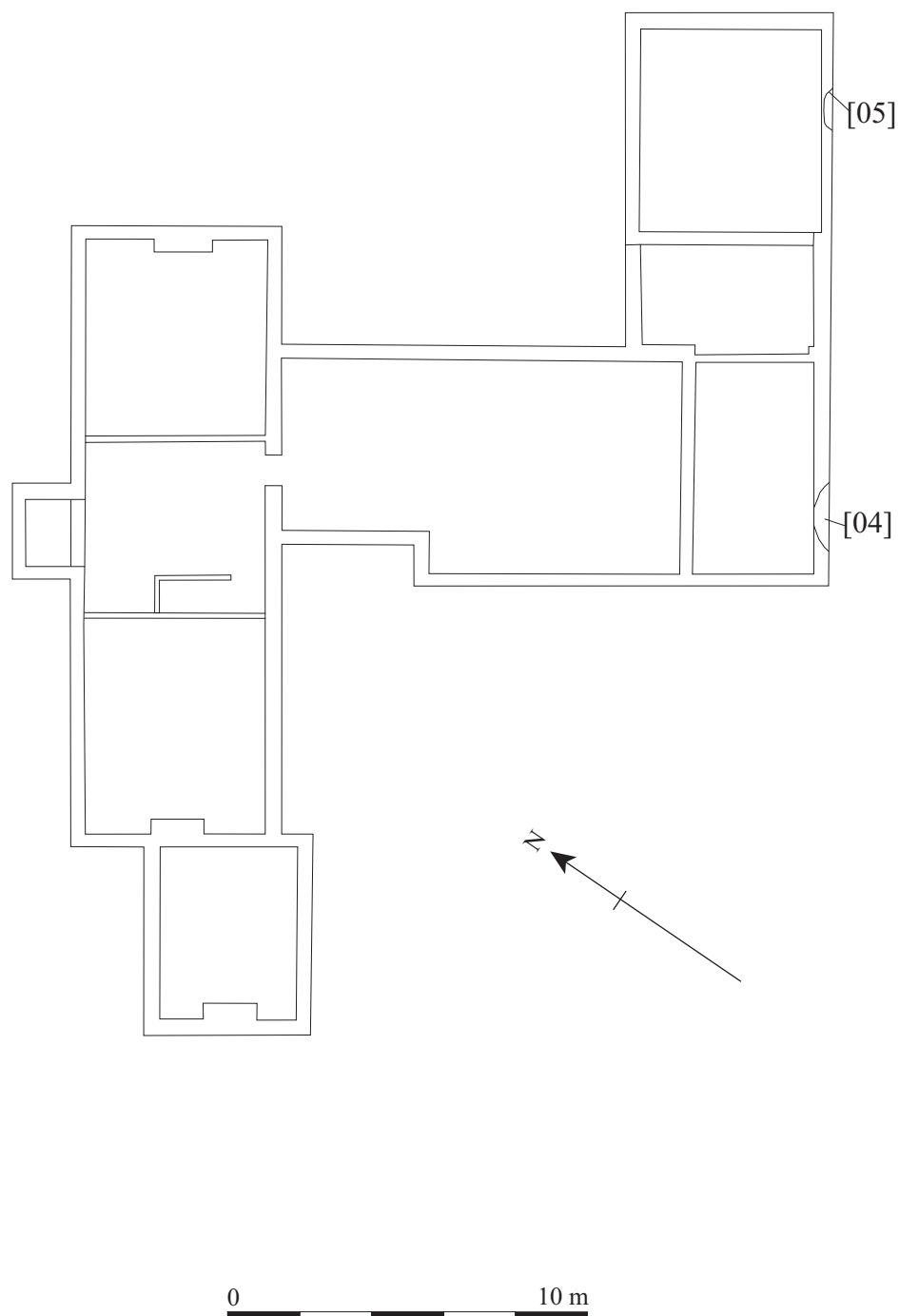


Figure 2. Site Plan

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by *Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 16 sherds with a total weight of 79g. It comprised a range of medieval wares which indicate that the site was occupied from the 11th century to the late 15th or 16th century.

The pottery was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975-1350. 2 sherds, 5g.

OXBf: North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD1050 – 1400. 1 sherd, 6g.

OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 3 sherds, 10g.

OXCX: Shelly Coarseware, AD1100-1400. 1 sherd, 4g.

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 8 sherds, 44g.

OXCL: Cistercian ware, 1475-1700. 1 sherd, 10g

The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

	OXAC		OXBf		OXY		OXCX		OXAM		OXCL		
Cntxt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
2	1	2	1	6	3	10	1	4	8	44	1	10	L15thC
4	1	3											11thC?
Total	2	5	1	6	3	10	1	4	8	44	1	10	

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

5.2 Metalwork

A much worn halfpenny thought to be of George III came from subsoil (02) along with a piece of lead of indeterminate use.

6 DISCUSSION

The subsoil (02) that may be a cultivation or ploughsoil, contained a relatively high number of sherds of pottery that came from the east side of the site. The range of fabrics is varied although typical of sites in the region. The amount of pottery suggests occupation close by and perhaps to the east, although the medieval village was to the west. There may have been an isolated dwelling or farm in the vicinity of this development site. The pits may belong to this dwelling. The date range of the occupation lasts until the late 15th or early 16th century and may have begun in the 11th century although the majority of the pottery dates to after the beginning of the 13th century when the 11th and 12th century fabrics were still in use.

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