

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

PATCHFIELD BARN, STANDLAKE ROAD,

NORTHMOOR, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SP 41346 02850

JUNE 2018

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SUMMARY

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at Patchfield Barn on the north side of Standlake Road in Northmoor, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 41346 02850). No archaeology was encountered in any of the monitored excavated areas.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located in Scheduled Monument 1006343 - Prehistoric and later settlements near Northmoor. This is known through cropmark information and archaeological excavations in the past. It comprises trackways, paddocks, field systems and small enclosures; some for roundhouses. The development area is not within an area of cropmarks. The site lies at approximately 63m AOD. The underlying geology that the site is situated on is Floodplain or Northmoor Terrace.

1.2 Planning Background

West Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission and the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and sport via Historic England issued Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) for conversion and extension of 'Patchfield Barn' to provide a single dwelling. Due to the area of development falling within Scheduled Monument 1006343, a condition was attached to the permission and SMC requiring a watching brief to be maintained during the course of any below ground operations relating to the development construction works on the site.

1.3 Archaeological Background

As mentioned above, the site is located in Scheduled Monument 1006343 - Prehistoric and later settlements near Northmoor. This is known through cropmark information and archaeological excavations in the past. It comprises trackways, paddocks, field systems and small enclosures; some for roundhouses. The development area is not within an area of cropmarks.

Archaeological investigations in the surrounding 2-4 mile area have recovered lower Palaeolithic implements, especially handaxes, made from flint imported into the area and local quartzite (MacRae & Maloney 1988), a few late Upper Palaeolithic struck flints dating to c. 12,000 years BP. However, Palaeolithic finds in the Northmoor area are likely to be redeposited as they were not recovered from *in-situ* ground surfaces. There are also a number of early Mesolithic struck flints from this same general area indicating that there was evidence of prolonged use for various activities from this period.

Neolithic through to Iron Age occupation related activities have been well documented as a result of heavy gravel quarrying in the Lower Windrush Valley. Less than two miles away lies Devil's Quoits circle henge monument which is epicentre to an extensive network of over 70 barrow cemeteries (Barclay 1995: 78-105). Evidence of prehistoric activity by way of Neolithic pits has been found further to the north (Thomas 1955; Lambrick and Allen 2006, 35-43) and Bronze Age pits have been found to the west (Case and Whittle 1982, 88- 102) but not to the south.

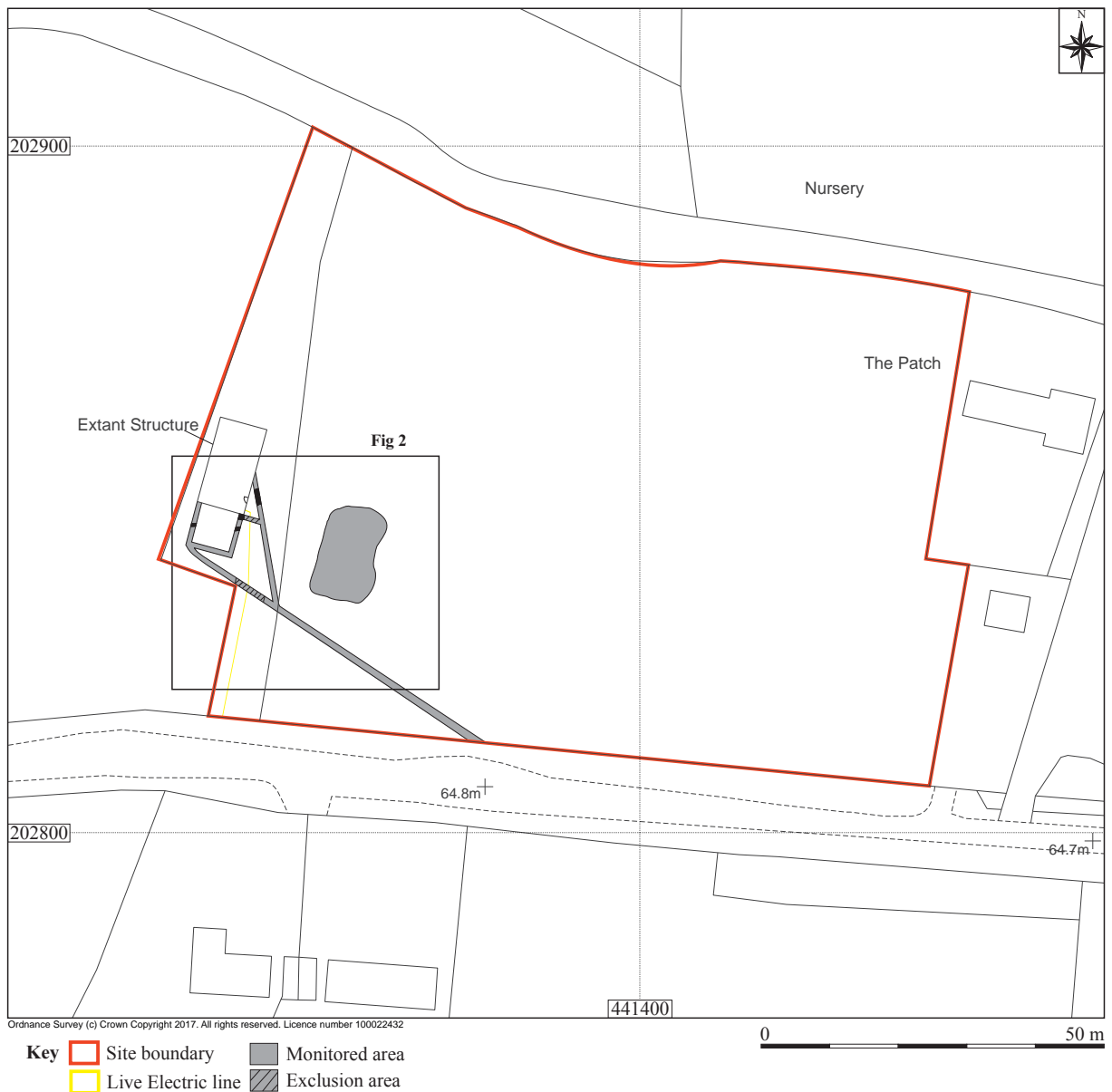
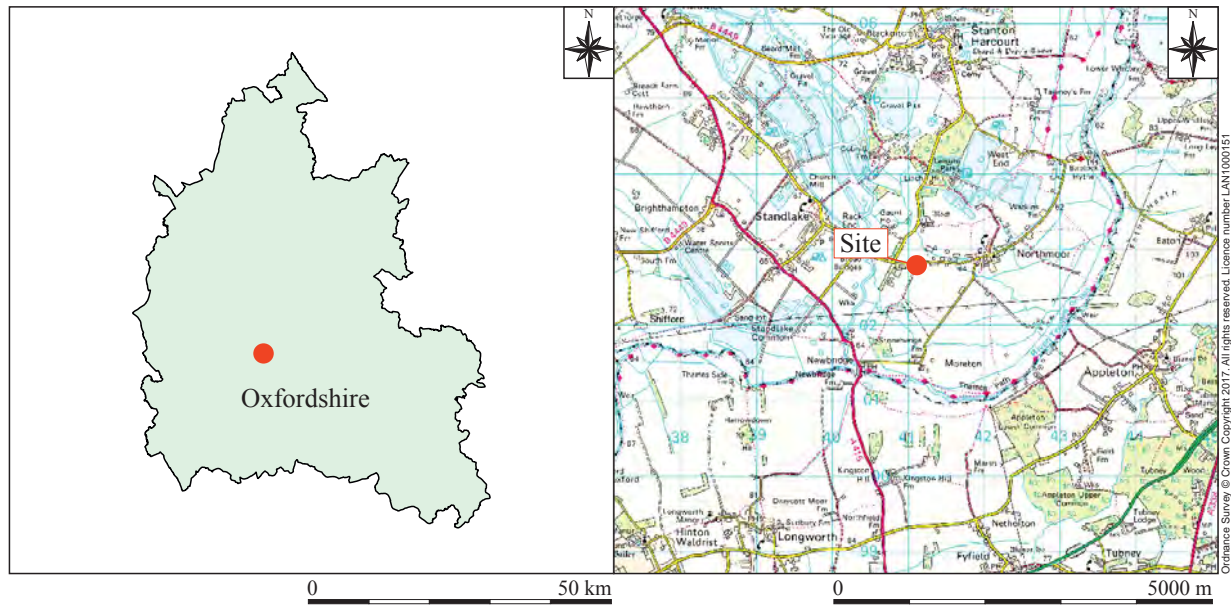


Figure 1: Site location

Palaeo-environmental evidence has shown that parts of the Windrush floodplain still retained ancient woodland in low-lying areas until the late Bronze Age (Robinson 1993, 7-19). The small quantity of material recovered in the area along with this evidence might suggest that low-lying parts of the Lower Windrush Valley were not extensively utilised in the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age periods.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To make a record of any archaeological remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

In particular:

- To record any evidence associated with the known prehistoric and later activity in the area.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with West Oxfordshire District Council and Historic England. The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

3.2 Methodology

A 16 tonne 360 JCB with bladed bucket was used to excavate all areas monitored. Where live electrical lines were known to exist, precautionary safety measures were taken to avoid these with 5m exclusion zones. With the exception of the aforementioned exclusion zone for safety, all monitored excavation extended to the maximum depth of the service trench or until natural gravels were encountered. 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, especially for finds relating to prehistoric and later material. No archaeological material was recovered.

4 RESULTS (Figure 2, Plate 1 and 2)

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.

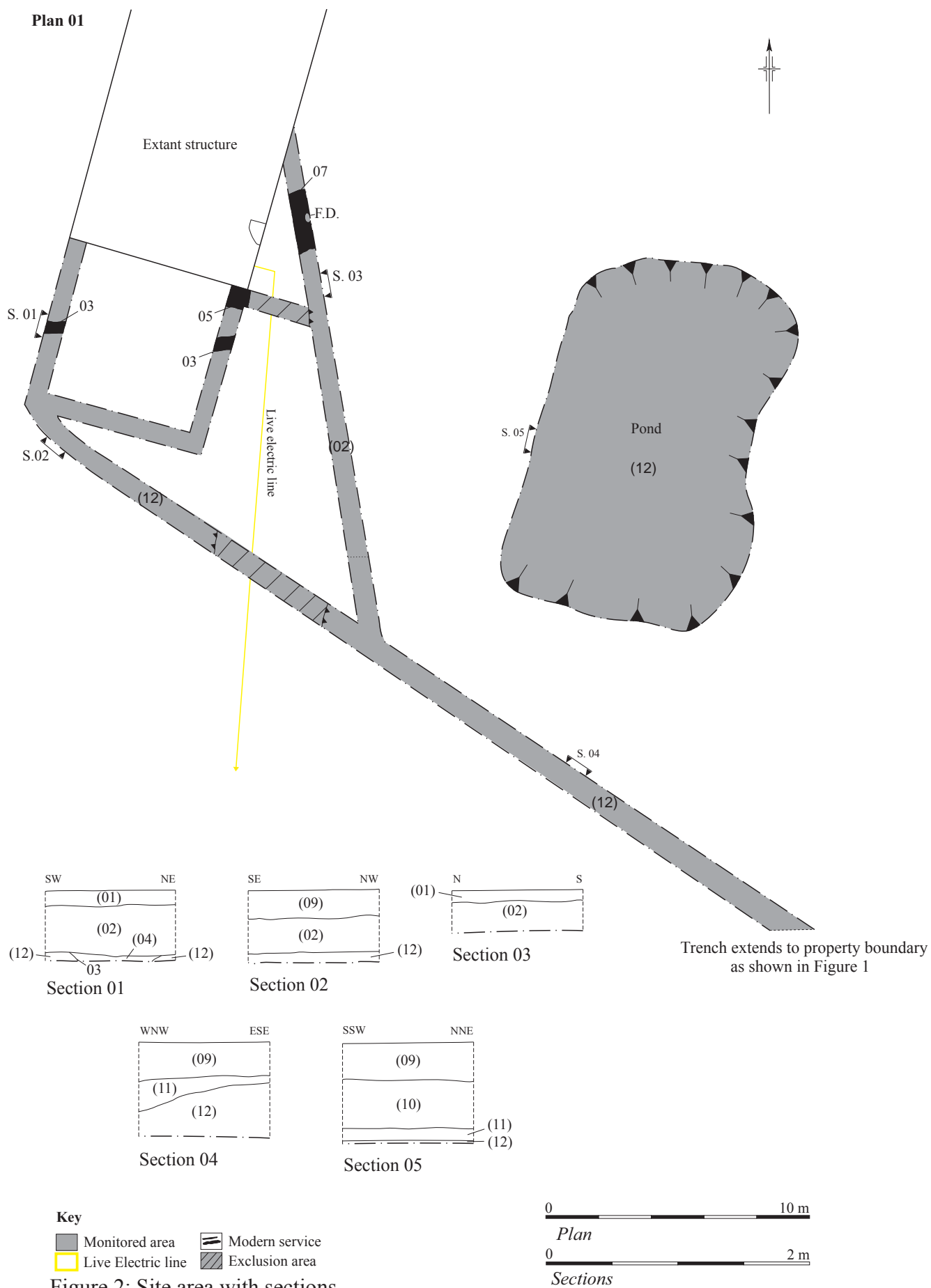


Figure 2: Site area with sections

4.1 Western Foundation and Service Trenches

The area of trenching for the new foundations of the addition to the extant structure as well as associated service trenches was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.52m which was the depth the natural river gravels (12) were encountered, which were a mid-reddish yellow of small gravel of <0.01m in diameter. Into this gravel there was a cut, 03, for a water pipe which the land owner had indicated was no longer in use but had in recent years run to a well nearby to the SW of the project area. This was filled by (04) which was a dark greyish brown clayey silt with gravel inclusions occasionally throughout. Also cut into the natural was builder's cut 05, with a fill (06) of dark greyish brown silty clay. To east of the structure a field drain was also encountered within cut 07, which was filled by (08) a blackish brown organic smelling wet clayey silt. Above this was a deposit of made ground (02) which was associated with the construction of the extant structure and the levelling of the area for the drive/parking, which was greyish brown clayey silt with gravel inclusions occasionally throughout and a large amount of rubble material sorted through the deposit such as brick and tile fragments, and plastic modern waste materials. Above this was the gravel for the drive and parking surface (01) which covered the entire area surrounding the structure.

4.2 Eastern Service Trench and Pond

The area of service trench which extended to the east of the gravel drive was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.72m. As the service trench approached its easternmost extent where it required the greatest maximum depth for the fall of the waste pipe, the same natural gravels (12) were encountered at a depth of 0.52m or less as in the area surrounding the structure to the west (see Section 04 on Fig 2). The area of the retention pond was photographed as work progressed due the rapid ingress of water from the low-lying water table (see Plate 1 and 2).



Plate 1. Working shot of pond excavation pre-water ingress. Facing SW.



Plate 2. Representative Section of the pond, post-ex S.05. Facing NW.

Due to the natural slop in the terrain, there was a layer of colluvium (11) which had accumulated above the gravels in the low-lying area nearest the gravel drive. It was a dark blueish-grey silty clay which was friable but firm and very clean of any inclusions and was 0.21m thick at its deepest point. Above this colluvium was a layer of dark brown clayey silt flood plain deposit (10) which was up to 0.41m thick. This extended across the entire eastern area of excavation where the drive/parking area gravels were not present. Above this was the topsoil (09) which was across the entire area not comprised of the gravel.

4.3 Reliability of Results

The reliability of the results are considered to be very good as the weather was clear and there were no obstructions or impediments during work. The geological horizons were clear and apparent.

5 FINDS

No archaeological material was recovered. Modern brick rubble and plastic was observed but not kept from the made ground deposit (02) surrounding the extant structure. No other material was recovered.

6 DISCUSSION

The area of impact falls within a Scheduled Monument (1006343) which is known through cropmark information and archaeological excavations in the past, as has been briefly outlined in Section 1. The development area is not within an area of cropmarks

so there was a low likelihood that archaeological material would be found, but as the area is currently in undeveloped floodplain, monitoring was required as a precaution.

The area with the highest potential for recovering archaeological information was the area excavated for the retention pond to the east of the structure. This area was stripped to natural gravels and showed no evidence of archaeologically significant activities.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX I: OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project Name	Patchfield Barn, Standlake Road, Northmoor, Oxfordshire	
Short description	John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at Patchfield Barn on the north side of Standlake Road in Northmoor, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 41346 02850). No archaeology was encountered in any of the monitored excavated areas.	
Project dates	Start: 15-05-2018 End: 15-05-2018	
Project type	Watching Brief	
Previous work	none	
Future work	none	
PROJECT LOCATION		
Site Location	OXFORDSHIRE WEST OXFORDSHIRE WITNEY Patchfield Barn, Standlake Road, Northmoor, Oxfordshire	
Study area	1700 Square metres	
Site co-ordinates	SP 441353 202846 51.878938871855 -1.358765294512 51 52 44 N 001 21 31 W Point	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Name of organisation	John Moore Heritage Services	
Project Brief originator	West Oxfordshire District Council	
Project Design (WSI)	John Moore	
Project Manager	John Moore	
Project Supervisor	Stephanie N. Duensing	
MONUMENT TYPE	None	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS	None	
PROJECT ARCHIVES	Intended final location of archive	Content
Physical	None	None
Paper	John Moore Heritage Service	Report, Primary Context Records, Drawings.
Digital	John Moore Heritage Service	Report, Primary Context Records, Drawings, Digital Photos.
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
Oxford Archaeology South, 2013 <i>Scheduled Monument 1006343, Stonehenge Farm, Northmoor, Oxfordshire</i> , Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Excavation.		