

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

**POND FARM BARN, CHURCH ROAD,
WANBOROUGH, SWINDON, WILTSHIRE**

SN4 0DQ

NGR SU 21500 82750

*On behalf of
Tailormade Building Solutions Ltd*

APRIL 2016

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CONTENTS

	Page
SUMMARY	1
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2. AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	3
3. STRATEGY	3
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	3
4. RESULTS	3
5. FINDS	7
6. DISCUSSION	8
7. ARCHIVE	9
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY	9

FIGURES AND PLATES

Figure 1. Site Location	2
Figure 2. Overall plan and sections	4
Plate 1. Ground reduction of new driveway and parking area	5
Plate 2. Linear pit 07	6
Plate 3. Reduced ground within the foundations	6

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at Pond Farm Barn, Church Road, Wanborough (NGR SU 21500 82750). This involved the monitoring of an area for parking and access to the site that was stripped directly northwest of the barn, excavation of the foundation trenches for the new development and ground reduction within the footprint of the building. The area was heavily disturbed by the earlier demolition / modification of the barn in the Post-Medieval period.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located at Pond Farm Barn, Church Road, Wanborough, Swindon, Wiltshire (NGR SU 21500 82750), in the parish of Wanborough. The site lies at approximately at 145m above OD. The underlying geology is Upper Greensand Formation, a Lower Cretaceous deposit.

1.2 Planning Background

Swindon Borough Council has granted planning permission for the erection of a detached dwelling with garage. 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

An evaluation in the former grounds of the farm found remains of three periods; early and late Roman and Saxon ditches, medieval gullies, possible Roman walls, and undated postholes.

Wanborough lies mostly to the south of Ermine Street, the main Roman road from Cirencester to Silchester and approximately 2km to the south-east of its junction with the Roman road to Marlborough. At this junction lies the small Roman town of *Durocornovium*. Wanborough itself was first mentioned in documents of late Saxon date (a charter of King Ethelwulf of AD 854) however this charter is now suspect. The name is thought to derive from *Waenbeorgon* “(place at) the tumour-shaped mounds” (Mills 1998) and by the time of Domesday Book in 1086 Wanborough was held by the Bishop of Winchester (Williams and Martin 2002). It became a thriving medieval manor.

An evaluation by trial trench at Beanlands to the north of the site (JSAC 1997) revealed Roman and medieval deposits underlying ridge and furrow. Similarly, evaluation at Marsh Farm to the north of Wanborough revealed medieval ditches (Taylor 2007). An inhumation cemetery north-west of Covington Farm (SU 2113 8283) is known. The cemetery is currently of unknown date but may be of Roman or Saxon origin.

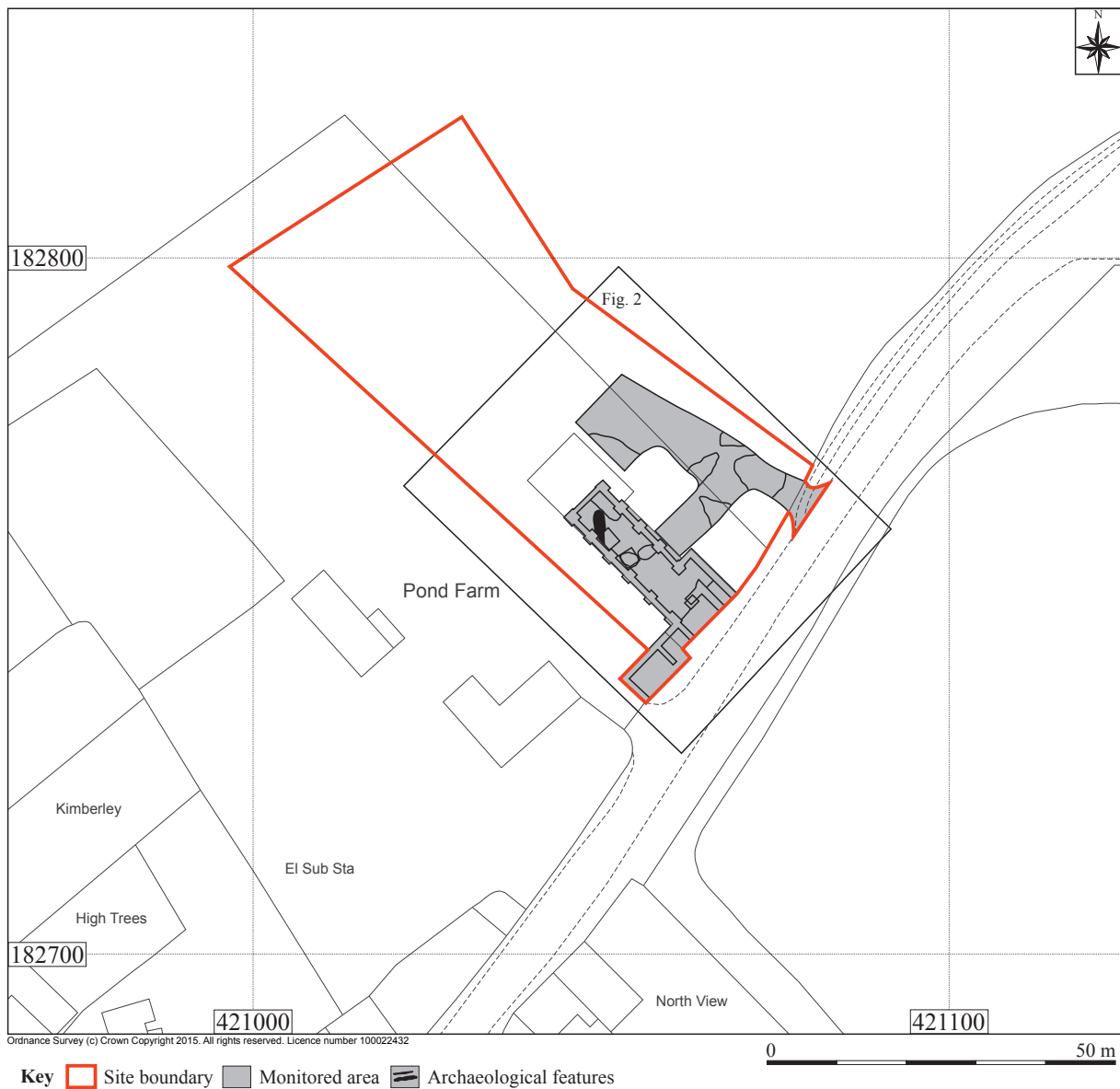
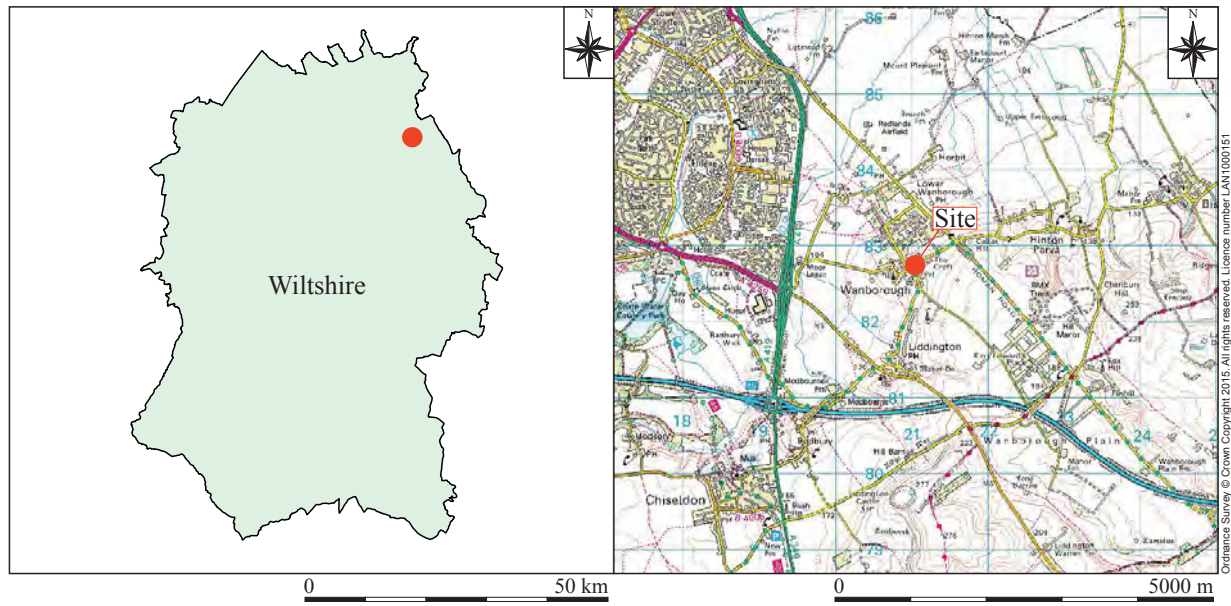


Figure 1: Site location

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To 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 the presence of any activity connected to the known Roman, Saxon and medieval remains in the vicinity

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Wiltshire County Archaeological Service, the archaeological advisors to Swindon Borough Council.

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 watching brief involved the monitoring of an area for parking and access to the site that was stripped directly northwest of the barn, excavation of the foundation trenches for the new development and ground reduction within the footprint of the building.

The resultant spoil from the works was visually scanned, especially for finds relating to the Roman through to Medieval periods.

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

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.

The watching brief involved the monitoring of an area for parking and access to the site that was stripped directly northwest of the barn (Fig. 2, Plate 1). This involved removing 0.4m overburden from the area; a 0.4m thick layer of a dark grey / brown silty sand (04) that was a topsoil that contained frequent amounts of demolition material. A representative sample of finds were collected that included one brick,

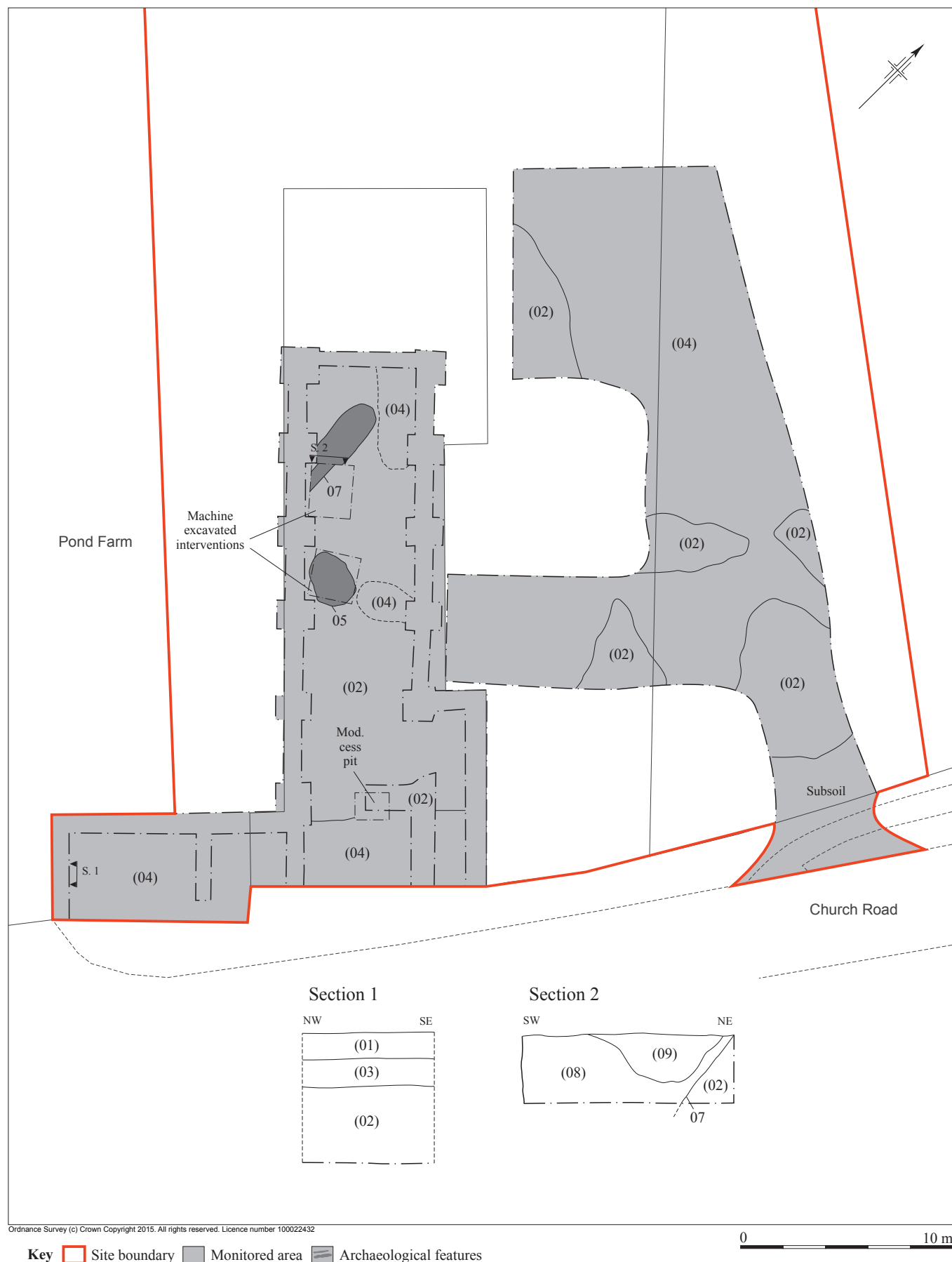


Figure 2: Overall plan and sections

three sherds of pottery and tile fragments that had a 19th – 20th century date. Topsoil (04) overlay the natural greensand (02) that was heavily disturbed on the upper surface with only pockets of clean natural surviving.

Further work included the monitoring of the excavation / re-excavation of the foundation trenches for the new development (Fig. 2). The trench was 1m deep and contained two layers overlying the natural greensand (02) (Fig. 2) The upper layer was 0.0.2m thick, a dark greenish brown silty sand loam (01), that contained frequent amounts of building rubble associated with the demolition of the barn. Underlying layer (01) was a 0.2m thick layer of compacted blue-grey clay (03) that contained frequent amounts of sub-angular stone which overlay the natural greensand (02). This layer probably represented a former floor surface within the barn.

The final stage of work involved monitoring ground reduction by 0.4m within the footprint of the new foundations. This revealed a continuation of topsoil / disturbed ground (04) especially in the southeastern extent of the building and two further pockets of disturbed ground further northwest (Fig. 2, Plate 3).

Two features were identified cut into the natural greensand (02). Pit 05 (Fig. 2) was sub-oval in shape, 1.8m wide, 2.5m long and 0.2m deep with shallow sloping sides and an uneven base. It was filled by a loose, dark brown silty sand (06) that contained frequent amounts of stone and rubble together with two fragments of brick dated to the 19th century, one iron object and one sherd of residual pottery that dated to the 17th century. Linear pit 07 (Fig. 2, Plate 2) was only partially excavated and was sub-rectangular in shape, 1.5m wide, 4.5m long and over 0.5m deep and orientated north / south. It had moderately sloping sides and contained two fills. Lower fill (08) was a dark grey clay. Upper fill (09) was a greenish brown silty clay that contained one fragment of brick and one fragment of tile that dated to the 18th – 19th century.



Plate 1. Ground reduction of new driveway and parking area, looking northwest



Plate 2. Linear pit 07 looking north



Plate 3. Reduced ground within the foundations looking southeast

No other features were identified on the site.

5 FINDS

Pottery

Four fragments of pottery, of a combined weight of 158 g, were recovered from two individual contexts.

Context	Type	Weight (g)	Comments	Date range
04	Whiteware	75	Underglazed transfer print	19 th -20 th C
		16		
		17	Yellow slip	
06	?Harlow slipware	50	Painted yellow design	17 th C

Table 1: Pottery

The group of three pottery fragments found in context (04) were positively identified as modern whiteware. Blue underglazed transfer print decorations were observed on two of the fragments. The fragments can be dated to the 19th -20th century.

The single fragment collected from context (06) was tentatively identified as Harlow slipware (1600-1700), as it shows the typical very smooth brick red colour clay fabric, with linear design painted in yellow liquid clay under the glaze.

It is not recommended to retain the modern pottery fragments.

Ceramic Building Material

A small assemblage of six ceramic building material fragments, weighing 6747 g in total, was recovered from three individual contexts. The material was recorded by context, divided by type and fabric, counted, measured and weighed. The state of preservation is generally fair, though none of the object was complete.

The vast majority (80%) of the group is represented by brick fragments; a single fragmentary roof tile completes the collection.

Context	Type	Weight (g)	Dimensions (mm) (LxWxT)	Comments	Date range
04	Brick	2900	218x102x68	Mortar	19 th C
	Ceramic tile	19	>59x>52x6	Modern coated tile	20 th C
06	Brick	1520	>151x102x61	Mortar	19 th C
		313	>75x>56x62	Vitrification on top face	?19 th ?
09	Brick	1910	>150x112x62	Mortar	?19 th ?
	Roof tile	85	>80x>52x16	Corner preserved	?18 th -19 th C

Table 2: Ceramic building material

- Bricks

All of the recovered brick fragments were handmade. Although the colour of the fabrics varies from orange-pink to dark red, all of them are relatively smooth on the surface and reveal frequent medium to large-sized inclusions in section.

The complete thickness is preserved in all of the examples; three of the fragments have also maintained their full width. Based on the dimensions and general aspect, the assemblage can be tentatively dated to the late 19th C (Hammond 1990).

One of the fragments collected from context (06) shows clear traces of vitrification, unusually placed on the top face of the brick. Overfiring of the headers of bricks for decorative purposes started in Tudor times, but became extremely popular during the 18th and 19th centuries.

- Roof Tile

Clay plain tiles were developed in the 13th century to replace shingles and thatch in the roofing of domestic buildings. Handmade peg tiles were commonly used until the 19th C, when machine-made tiles became popular, with little variation in the manufacturing technique. Also, good quality roof tiles were reused over long period of times; therefore, the potential for dating evidence of plain roof tiles remains limited.

The example recovered from context (09) was tentatively dated to the 18th-19th century on the basis of its general aspect.

It is not recommended to retain the ceramic building material assemblage due to its very limited potential for further analysis.

Iron

Two complete, identical iron objects of a combined weight of 569 gr were collected from context (06).

Each item is composed of a thin, curved iron plate with one rounded end, and a circular opening towards the rounded end. One of the items preserves 7 embedded nails protruding towards the back of the plate, arranged on two parallel rows of 3, with an extra nail in the centre. The second example shows only 5 nails arranged in 2 parallel rows. Traces of wood are visible on the inner face of both objects.

Although their function remains unidentified, it is suggested that the plates were to be fixed to a wooden pole, and the two passing holes were possibly used to hang or swing the pole from a machine or implement.

The objects remain unidentified and undated.

6 DISCUSSION

Groundworks conducted during the watching brief only revealed contexts of a late Post-Medieval date and no features of an earlier date were observed. The extent of the disturbed ground and rubble together with the two pits encountered suggest that the barn had been modified or partly demolished during the late Post-Medieval period.

There were no signs of the Roman to medieval remains seen directly to the north continuing into this development 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 Swindon Museum and Art Gallery with the accession number SWMAG 2015.005

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