

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

**THE MEWS HOUSE, CASTLE STREET,
DEDDINGTON, OXFORDSHIRE**

SP 46825 31625

On behalf of

Mr & Mrs V Jones

JUNE 2007

REPORT FOR Mr & Mrs V Jones
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FIELDWORK 3rd April – 11th May 2007

REPORT ISSUED 19 June 2007

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Site Code DECS 07
JMHS Project No: 1762
Archive Location Oxfordshire County Museum Service
Accession number OCMS: 2007.50

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>SUMMARY</i>	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	
1.2 Planning Background	
1.3 Archaeological Background	
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	2
3 STRATEGY	2
3.1 Research Design	
3.2 Methodology	
4 RESULTS	3
5 FINDS	5
6 DISCUSSION	6
7 BIBLIOGRAPHY	6
FIGURES	
Figure 1 Site location	2
Figure 2 Plan of western extension	4

Summary

A watching brief was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services during excavation of foundation trenches for two extensions to the existing house. A wall foundation probably from a building was present along with two pits. These may be dated to the 13th century although could be date from after the mid 12th century.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site lay within the historic core of Deddington close to the site of Deddington Castle. The property is on the south-east side of Castle Street (NGR SP 46825 31625). The underlying geology is Middle Lias Marlstone close to its junction with clays, silts and siltstones. The site of the residential dwelling house and garden lies at approximately 120m OD.

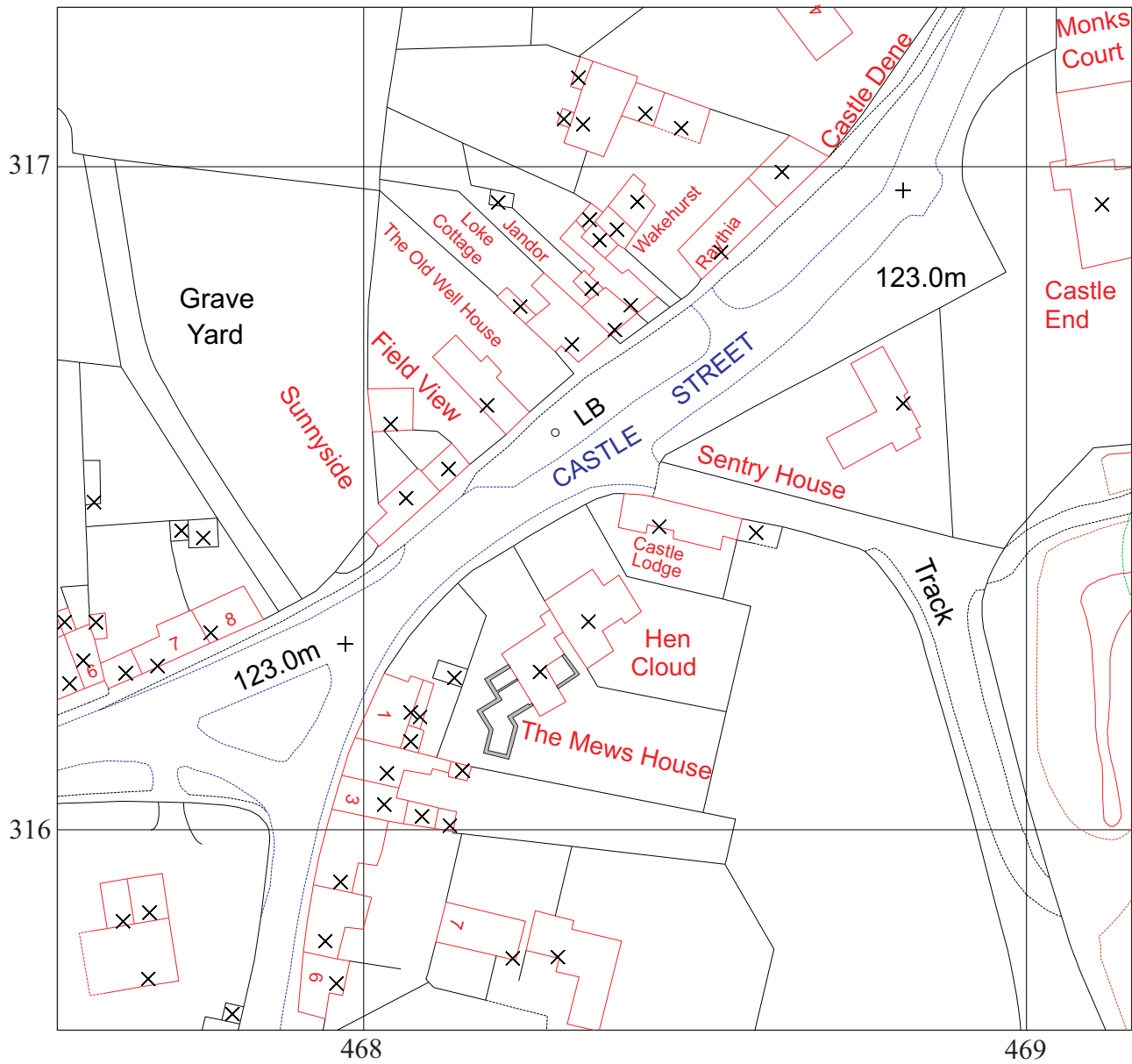
1.2 Planning Background

Cherwell District Council granted planning permission to construct a new two storey extension to the north-east elevation, the demolition of an existing garage and construction of a new single storey extension to the south-west elevation of the Mews House, Castle Street, Deddington (06/02411/F). Due to the potential of the site to contain archaeological remains a condition was attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a watching brief during groundworks. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a *Brief* for the work.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The name Deddington is probably Saxon in origin and is first mentioned in 950 AD in the Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici ed. J M Kemble 1839-48. The town retains its medieval street plan, which can be divided into two main components; the irregular pattern of the original settlement in the streets to the south and east of the Market Place, and New Street, a planned extension, which had been laid out by the early 13th century along the pre-existing Oxford-Banbury Road (K. Rodwell ed. *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire. A Survey of the New County* 1974).

The site lies to the west of the Scheduled Monument of Deddington Castle (SM21807), which includes an 11th century motte and bailey castle that may have been built on the orders of Bishop Odo of Bayeux, with a bailey on either side of a central motte, and a 12th century stone enclosure castle. By the late 14th century what remained of the structure was being robbed for building material, and by 1530 only a few ruins survived above ground. Jope's series of excavations that began in 1947 did find traces of late Saxon activity that hint at the origins of this part of Deddington. It was normal for the Normans to impose their defensive sites on an occupied part of an existing town as attested at other sites such as Wallingford and Oxford. Otherwise little is known archaeologically of the area of the town lying between the Norman church and the Norman castle. However, it would seem likely that this would have been the nucleus of the late Saxon and Norman period town



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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 identify and record any archaeological remains exposed during the construction works
- The particular aims was to record and characterise any Saxon and/or 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) and MoRPHE (English Heritage 2006).

3.2 Methodology

The existing extension on the southeast side of the house was demolished before the commencement of the watching brief. The removal of the topsoil in the southern part of the footprint of the southeast extension was monitored along with the excavation of foundation trenches for the two extensions. The work for proposed new garage was not monitored due to the shallow foundations to be employed. Services for the new extensions were to use existing services.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [] indicate cut or positive features i.e. ditches or walls; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material. CBM refers to ceramic building material.

The lowest geological deposit seen was stiff yellow-grey clay (10) only seen in the northern part of the western extension where it was *c.* 500mm below modern ground surface (mgs). This was overlaid by relatively bright orange-brown clay with 30% small stone inclusions increasing to 40% to the north (08). This rose to the north where it was only 250mm thick. Overlying the last was a friable pale-medium slightly orange-brown very slightly clayey silt that was 400mm thick in the south part of the western extension decreasing to 300mm thick in the northern part (07). This again was a natural deposit. The natural deposits rise up to the north.

Cut into deposit (07) was a wall foundation [09]. This was orientated NW-SE and

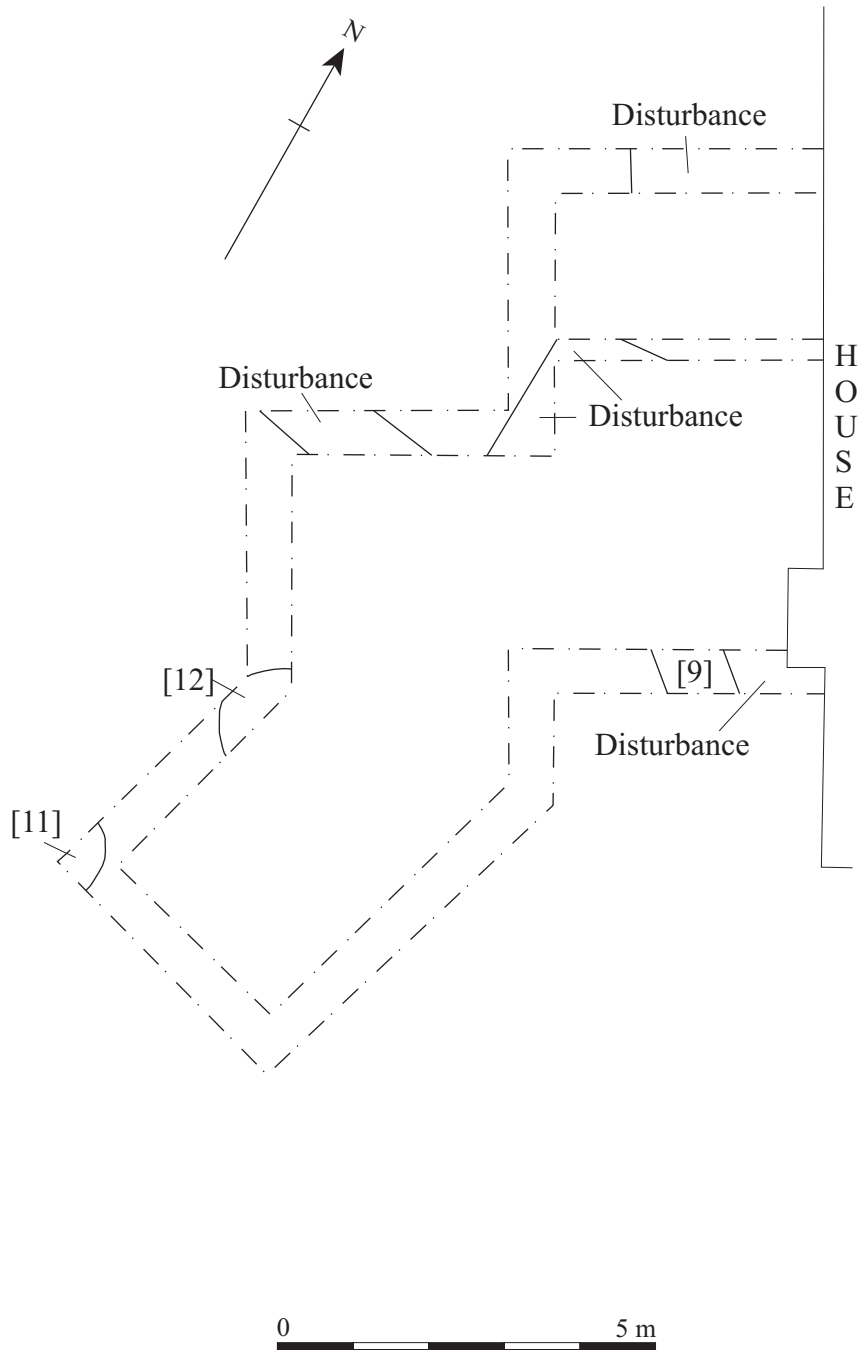


Figure 2. Plan of western extension

only seen in one foundation trench (Fig. 2). The foundation was constructed from ironstone up to 600x340x280mm in size set in a matrix of orange-brown clay. It was formed of two faces of large stone (larger on the eastern side where seen) with a rubble core and was 900mm wide. The wall was founded on the top of deposit (08) and survived in four courses, 600mm high.

Also cut into deposit (07) were two pits. The first pit [11] was sub-circular with a diameter of at least 750mm and a depth of 200mm. The sides were at 70° and it had a very slightly rounded base. It was filled with the same material as the overlying deposit (06). The second pit [12] again was sub-circular *c.* 1.5m in diameter and surviving 200mm deep. The sides were at 35-40° and it had a relatively flat base. Again it was filled with material the same as, or similar to, the overlying deposit (06). The pits may well have been cut from deposit (06) but the similarity of the fill to the deposit made distinction of any possible upper edges impossible.

Above the latest natural deposit (07) and sealing the pits was a deposit of friable orange-brown slightly clayey silt with 2% stone some 300mm thick (06). This was not present under the northern half of the western extension. This layer was an old horticultural or garden layer and contained pottery of 13th to mid 14th century date along with the occasional piece of animal bone and oyster shell. The layer appeared not to be present adjacent to wall foundation [09] with the wall overlaid by deposit (04).

In the northern half of the western extension was a layer of builders' rubble and demolition rubble (05) associated with the former extension. This directly overlaid the upper natural deposit (07) and was 300-500mm thick. This was the upper deposit in this part of the site. South of this was a topsoil deposit 180-200mm thick of friable grey loam (04) and appeared to have been imported onto the site when the present house was built.

Foundations, services and manholes associated with the previous extension had disturbed parts of the site (Fig. 2).

The eastern extension had Marlstone (03) as the lowest deposit overlaid by a stiff dark grey-blue organic clay (02). The latter had again been imported onto the site as seen filling excavations for the house footings above concrete foundations on the west side of the house. This was overlaid by builders' rubble (01).

5 FINDS

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 10 sherds with a total weight of 99g. The medieval material comprised a range of wares which indicate that the site was occupied from the mid 11th century to the 13th 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. 3 sherds, 51g.

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

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 3 sherds, 25g.

OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 1 sherd, 8g.

WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, mid 19th - 20th C. 2 sherds, 14g.

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 2. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

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

Context	OXAC		OXBF		OXAM		OXDR		WHEW		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
1							1	8	2	14	U/S
6	2	24			3	25					13thC
12	1	27	1	1							M12thC
Total	3	51	1	1	3	25	1	8	2	14	

6 DISCUSSION

The wall foundation may well be part of a building extending under the present house and to the south, as the wall was not seen further to the NW. Deposit (07) may well be a horticultural/garden deposit associated with the building. The pits appear to be contemporary with the horticultural/garden deposit as they are filled with similar material to the deposit. The pottery from pit [12] dates from some time after the mid 12th century. The latest date that the medieval activity on the site could have been was the mid 14th century from the pottery in the horticultural/garden deposit. This activity is presumably within a plot fronting Castle Street. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map of 1889 shows this site along with Hen Cloud (except for the north-east corner which was part of Castle Lodge) as an orchard with the boundaries to the west and south as it is today. The horticultural or garden deposit (06) lasted into at least the late 19th century when the site was an orchard.

The watching brief established that there was activity on the site in the medieval period, more likely in the 13th century although this could have started in the mid 12th century.

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