



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

**SMITHY'S YARD, KINGHAM,
OXFORDSHIRE**

SP 2594 2420

On behalf of

Dimefield Ltd.

OCTOBER 2007

REPORT FOR Dimefield Ltd.
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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	1
3 STRATEGY	3
3.1 Research Design	
3.2 Methodology	
4 RESULTS	3
4.1 Archaeological features	
4.2 Reliability of results	
5 FINDS	5
5.1 Pottery	
5.2 Environmental remains	
6 DISCUSSION	6
7 ARCHIVE	6
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	6
Figure 1 Site location	2
Figure 2 Plan	4

Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the ground work for four new houses and the relocation of an existing barn. Two undated ditches were located, one probably associated with the Scheduled Ancient Monument earthworks, as well as one dated to the 19th century.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site lies to the north of West Street in Kingham (NGR SP 2594 2420). It is sited behind the village hall. The underlying geology is fine loams over sand, which in turn overlies clay. The site lies at approximately 120m OD.

1.2 Planning Background

West Oxfordshire District Council has granted planning permission to construct four dwellings at Smithy's Yard, Kingham (2004/0892). This is a renewal of permission 99/0211. As part of the work a barn to the north of the site was to be relocated. A condition was attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a watching brief during groundworks. This was in line with PPG 16 and Local Plan policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

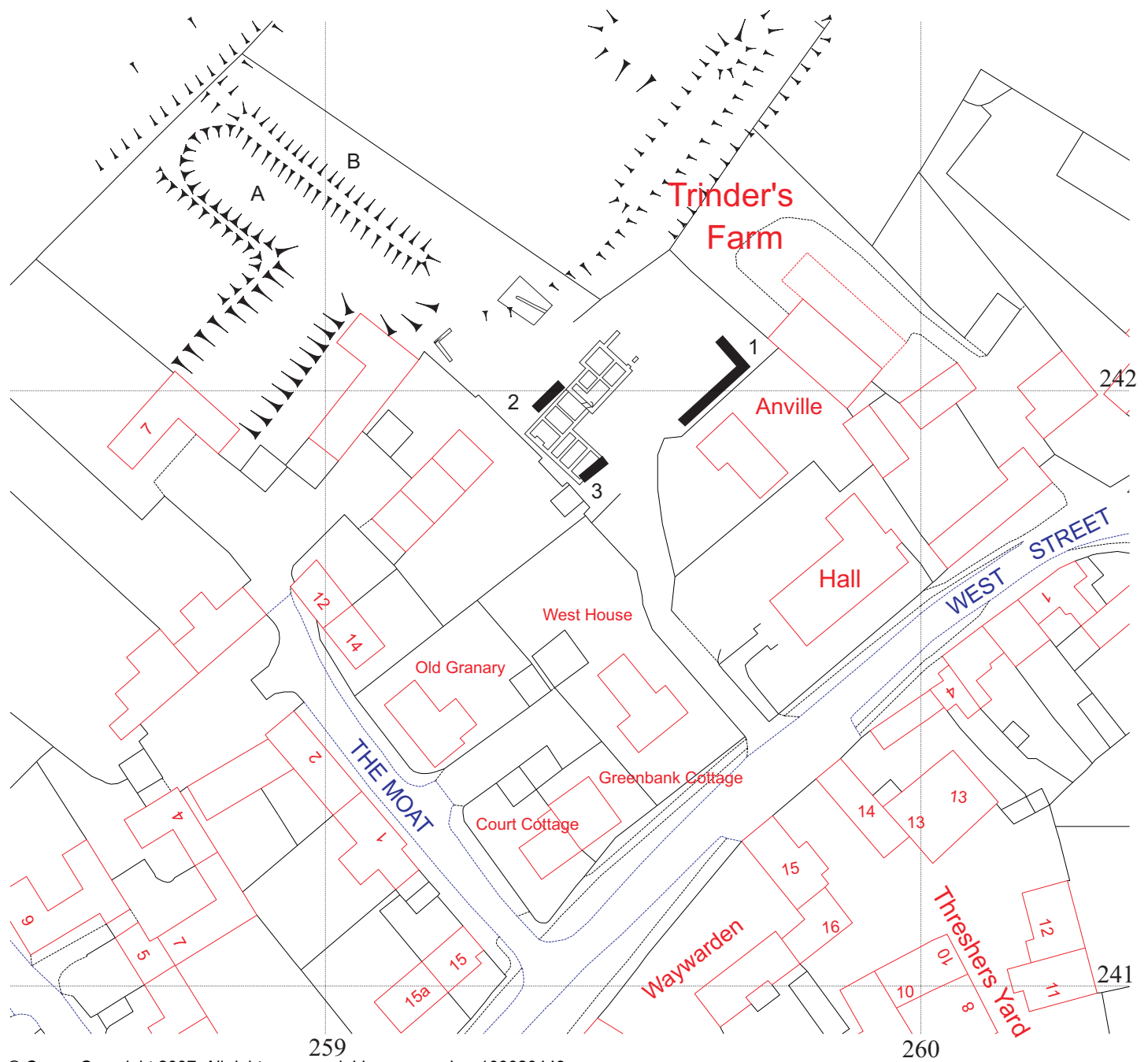
Immediately to the north of the development site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 255), which is a rectangular moat that survives as a substantial earthwork on three sides. The interior would appear to have contained buildings given the differential vegetation growth that is discernible. It is likely to have contained the original manor house that was superseded by a later timber framed manor to the southeast.

In April 1999 AOC Archaeology Group undertook an evaluation of the site (AOC 1999). This revealed two ditches at right angles to each other and apparently on the same orientation as the earthwork to the north. In addition a shallow linear cut contained poorly sorted angular limestone and river cobbles. It is possible that this was a surface within a farm building. Tile recovered from this deposit dated it to the medieval period (13th to 16th century). Overlying the possible surface was a wall footing.

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.



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0 50 m

Figure 1. Site Location

In particular:

- to record any remains associated with the medieval settlement.
- to attempt to understand the possible surface and later wall foundation and to attempt to date these remains
- to characterise the medieval use of the area

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.

3.2 Methodology

The removal of the topsoil in the area of the relocated barn prior to raft foundations being laid, and the excavation of the foundation trenches for the western two houses was monitored. This work was conducted using a mini-excavator employing a toothed 0.7m bucket to dig both the footing and service trenches and a toothless ditching bucket for the topsoil strip.

No monitoring of the groundworks for the house situated over AOC evaluation trench 1 was carried out the condition requiring this was forgotten by the applicant. In addition the footings for the house to the northwest of AOC evaluation trench 1 had been filled with concrete prior to attendance by an archaeologist. The height of the top of the concrete prevented identification of any possible archaeological remains.

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 and possible.

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

4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

4.1 Archaeological Features

All features were assigned individual context numbers. This number covered both the feature cut and the fill for pits, unless the feature was sample excavated by hand. Context numbers in [] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material. A general description of the feature fills is given.

The lowest deposit recorded was a firm orange-brown clay sand with grit and 10% small stones (02). It was mottled yellow in places and was part of the natural geology in the area. Above this was a yellow-brown to grey sandy clay with some small stones (01) that was 0.4m thick. The topsoil in the area of the new housing had already been stripped.

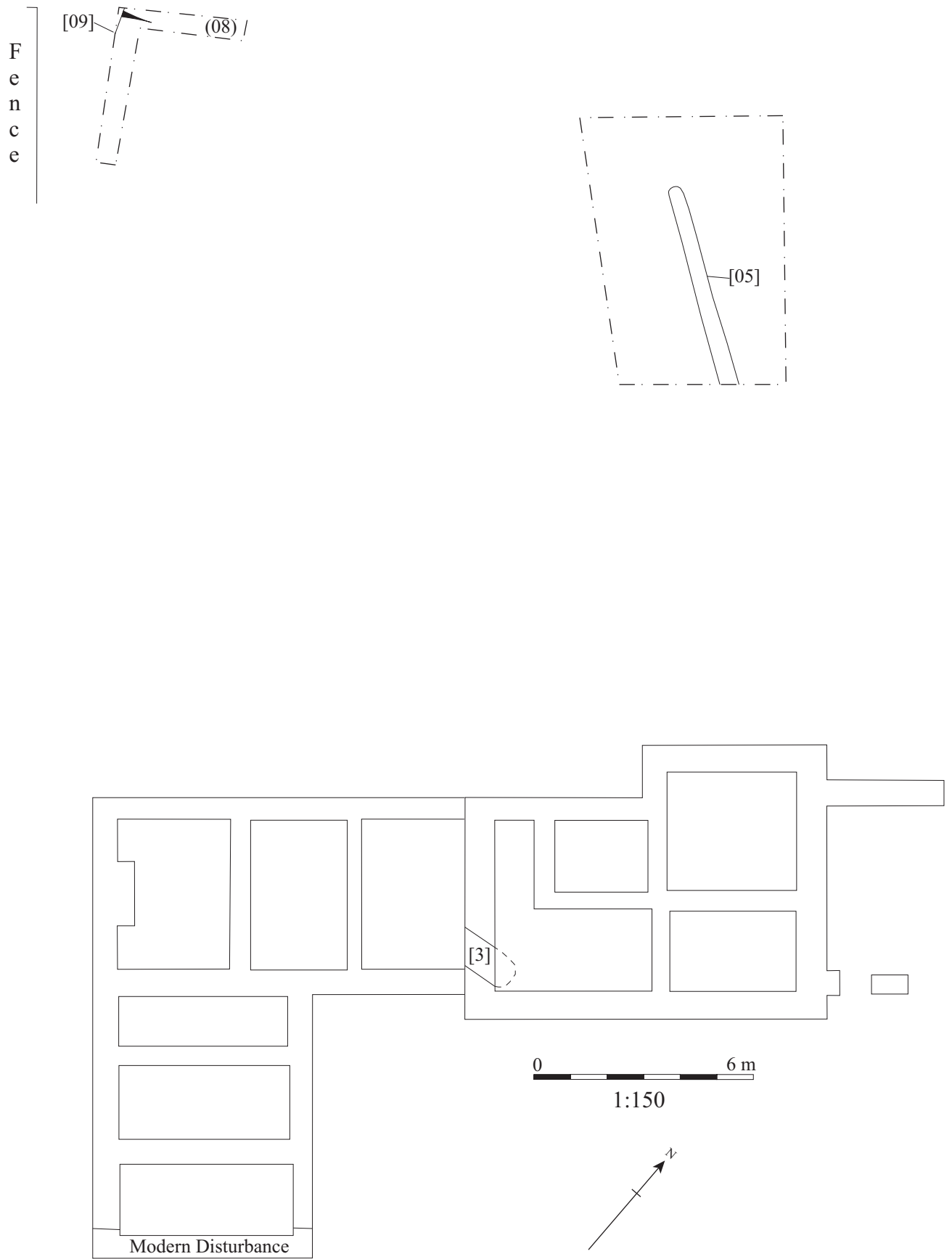


Figure 2. Plan

A pit or short ditch [03], near a terminal, was located within the foundation trench of the central building. It was 1m wide and at least 1.2m long. It was not fully excavated but contained a dark grey sandy clay with some stones and charcoal flecks. It was aligned roughly NW to SE.

This was the only archaeological feature recorded in the area of the houses, although several areas of modern disturbance and old services were noted.

To the north of the houses a barn had to be relocated to accommodate the new garden requirements. This area was subject to a topsoil strip and excavation for a small footing in the north-west corner of the area. The lowest deposit recorded was an orange-grey silty clay with 10% small stones (04). This was considered to be natural but still displayed the interface with the topsoil in places. The topsoil was a mid grey-brown slightly clayey silt (07), with the occasional brick fragment. Two ditches were revealed in this area, both cut into the natural (04).

The first [05] was aligned NNW to SSE, 0.55m wide and at least 5.5m long. The northern terminal end was located and at this point it narrowed to 0.4m wide. It was filled with a mid-grey slightly silty-clay with 2% pebbles (06), but was not excavated. Noted within the fill was a sherd of 19th–20th century pottery.

The second [09] appeared to be linear, only its western edge was seen within the foundation trench. It was at least 3.5m wide and filled with a loose mid orange-brown clayey silt (08) with 10% pebbles and cornbrash. It appeared to be aligned roughly N to S and was not excavated.

4.2 Reliability of Results

The building to the south-east of the site was already built and the building to the immediate north of this had had its foundation excavated, dug and filled with concrete prior to JMHS being notified about the necessity of the watching brief. Also the majority of the area had already been stripped of topsoil.

The weather conditions were very wet when the foundations of the central house were dug. Ground water was observed seeping into the open trenches in several places making observations difficult in certain areas.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery

Ditch fill (06) contained a sherd of yellow glazed white mass-produced earthenware, dating from the 19th and 20th century (Mellor 1994).

5.2 Environmental Evidence

No environmental samples were taken.

6 DISCUSSION

Relatively few archaeological features were recorded, two ditches [03] & [09] are undated while the third ditch [05] appears to be modern or at least have a relatively modern upper fill.

Ditch [03] is notably on a different alignment than that of the earthworks or any of the features recorded in the 1999 AOC evaluation, and is unlikely therefore to be contemporary.

The alignment of the ditch [09] appears to be on the bend of the outer earthwork ditch as is likely to form part of its western edge. This outer ditch can be seen on figure 1 following the fence line by Trinder's Farm and then turning to the north to join with the area marked A.

A ditch (marked A on figure 1) in a garden of a nearby house appears to be a continuation of the outer moat. This has been partly re-dug to provide a silage pit according to the information passed on from the previous farmer to the present owner. The internal bank of the earthwork (marked B) adjacent to this pit is far more pronounced than the rest of the structure, and is allegedly from the re-digging.

The 19th to 20th century ditch [05] appears to be on the same line as this enhanced bank, possibly indicating that these were also being used to indicate land divisions.

The ditch located in Trench 2 of the 1999 AOC evaluation was not seen continuing into the area of the foundations, it must obviously terminate just outside this area. Trench 3 was seen as an area of modern disturbance within the foundations. However in hindsight it might be that the stone surface located within it continued to the west, as a lot of rock was seen throughout this 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 records

Artefacts

Pottery

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the County Museums' Store under accession number 2007.26.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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