

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT

34 HIGH STREET, WHEATLEY, OXFORDSHIRE

SP 59410 05688

On behalf of

Mr. & Mrs. J Barker

NOVEMBER 2006

REPORT FOR Mr & Mrs J Barker
57 Gidley Way
Horspath
Oxford
OX33 1RG

PREPARED BY John Moore

FIELDWORK 31 January to 4 April 2007

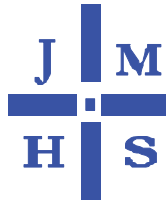
REPORT ISSUED 3 May 2007

ENQUIRES TO *John Moore Heritage Services
Hill View
Woodperry Road
Beckley
Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ
Tel/Fax 01865 358300*

Site Code WHHS 06
JMHS Project No: 1718
Archive Location Oxfordshire County Museum Service
Accession number OCMS: 2006.143

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

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SP 59410 05688

On behalf of

Mr. & Mrs. J Barker

MAY 2007

Summary

A watching brief was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services during the demolition of the 'ruin' and the excavation for some foundations for a new house. Further details on the construction and evolution of the ruined building were recorded.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located on the south side of the High Street towards its west end (NGR SP 59410 05688). The narrow, very long plot of land that forms the curtilage of the property contained a Victorian dwelling house, two outbuildings and private garden. One outbuilding was used as a garage; the other was a derelict ruin. The underlying geology is made up of several adjacent bands running across the site with alluvium on the street frontage, then Beckley Sand Member which in turn is replaced by Wheatley Limestone. The site lies at 75m OD sloping gently upwards to the south.

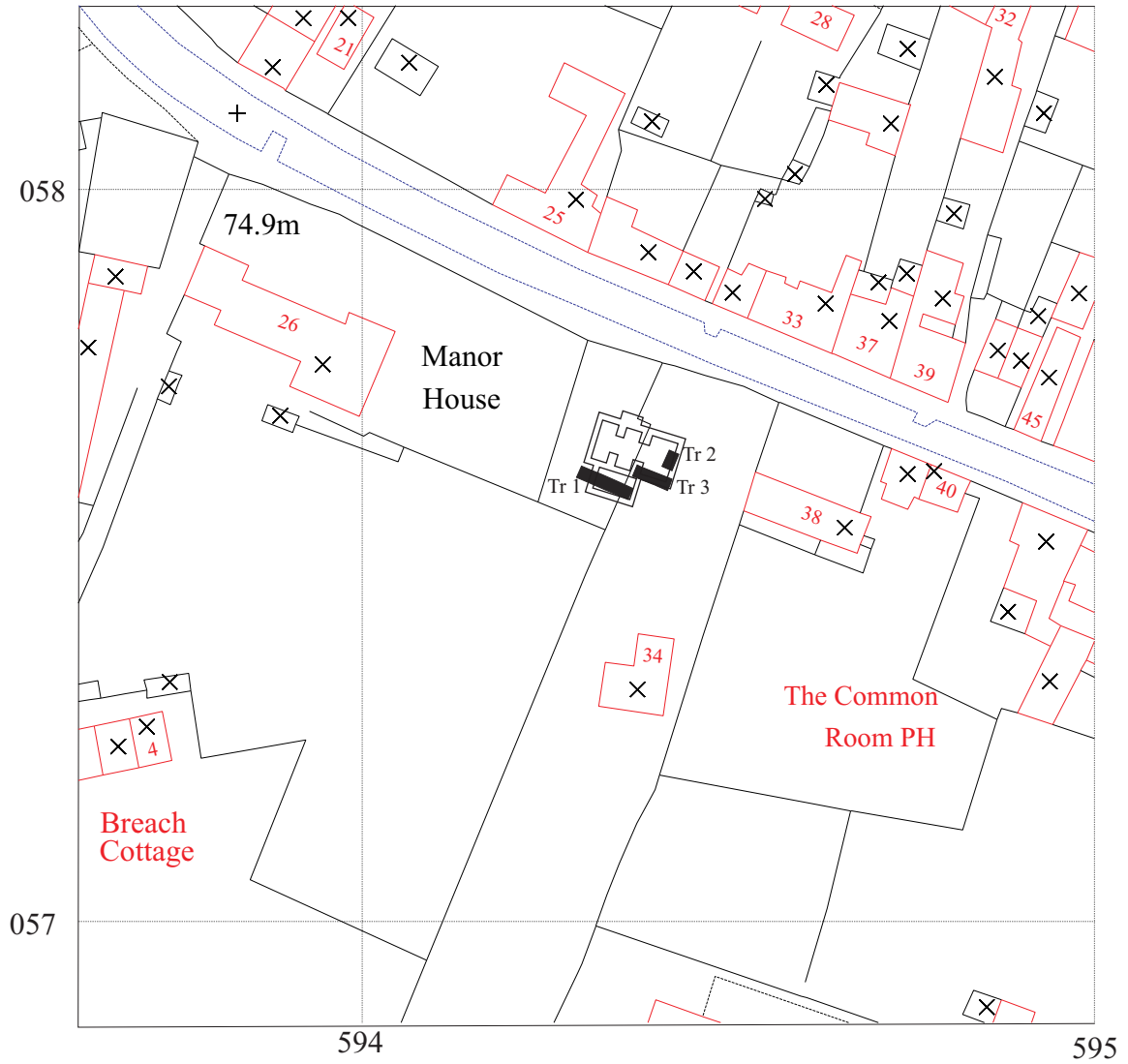
1.2 Planning Background

South Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for the demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings and the erection of two new dwellings with garages and improved vehicular access (P06/1007/CA). Due to the potential for the site to contain archaeological remains Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) advised that an archaeological field evaluation should be carried out prior to the determination of the application. This was carried out in the area of the new building (Fig. 1, Tr1-3) to the front of the site (JMHS 2006). A condition of the planning permission required the carrying out of an archaeological watching brief during development works.

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

The property that is now 34 High Street was undoubtedly once within the eastern boundary of the Manor curtilage. The Wheatley Enclosure Award plan of 1809 shows the long strip of land that now forms number 34 as the 5th and 6th allotment of T & J Harper; the 6th allotment forming the frontage of the landholding. Several buildings are shown within the frontage allotment on the 1809 map. One of these structures may have contained the supposed late 13th century loophole window photographed in the 1950s by Dr Margaret Wood and published in Wheatley Records volume 37. The Manor House contains medieval fabric, and it is entirely possible that other parts of the manorial complex may have extended to the east of the present Manor House.

The emergence of Wheatley as a separate manor held by Abingdon Abbey may date from the late 11th century. In 1526 the overlordship of the manor passed from the Abbey to Cardinal Wolsey's Cardinal College, and on his death passed to the Crown. From here it passed through a number of hands, and while it was still termed a manor in legal transactions of the 17th and 18th centuries, the implementation of manorial rights had by that time ceased. From that time onwards only the manor house was passed on.



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Figure 1. Site and footing location

An archaeological evaluation of the application site was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services in October 2006 (JMHS 2006). It was discovered that the ruined building had been built against the plot boundary on its east side. The plot boundary wall was built after the mid eighteenth century from pottery recovered from its fabric. This in turn was rebuilt as the east wall of the presently ruined building. A copy of the Enclosure Map of 1809 shows the site divided into three parts: the western part; a plot to the east as long as the western plot; a further plot to the rear of the second plot. The Award indicates two small cottages or similar in each of the two northern plots. A subsequent map of 1816 shows the same buildings as in 1809 plus an additional smaller building in the north of the western plot. None of these buildings appears to be in the same place as the present ruin. The more southerly building in the eastern plot fronting the road must relate to the building found in Trenches 2 and 3 to the east of the ruined building. This is dated to the 18th – 19th century from pottery found in the wall construction.

By 1881, 1st edition Ordnance Survey, the site appears to have been redeveloped to include three larger cottages replacing the earlier ones. One cottage occupied the site of the ruin and appears to have been of two builds with the rear a square structure (the present ruin) and a narrower part extending to the road. The rear part is visible on a photograph of 1860; the northern extension appears not to have been built at this time. The gable end is towards the road and it would appear that when the building was widened the roof was rebuilt. It is possible that the rebuilding of the east wall was at the same time as the widening and re-roofing. The later map of 1899 also shows the same three cottages. The OS map of 1921 does not show any cottages, only the existing house. However a photograph dated 1920 shows the north (road) end of the extension to the ruin, identified by the position of the pump shown on the photograph and on the 1881 and 1921 maps.

A milk round was run from this site in the 20th century. The surfaces in Trench 1 are dated to this century by pottery and a milk bottle top. The depth of the surfaces suggests that they were used as a cool store for the milk. No structure is shown on any maps in this position and therefore the store may have been no more than a lean to against the south side of the ruined building. The ‘ruin’ appears to date to the redevelopment of the plots between 1816 and 1881.

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 significant archaeological remains exposed during the construction works

Particular aims were to investigate and record

- the footings for the ruined building with special reference to the plot boundary wall that also forms part of the east side of the building
- any remains that might pre-date the post-medieval buildings found in the evaluation and that may relate to the manor to the west

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

An archaeologist examined the lower courses of the ruined building after the upper part had been demolished. Excavation of the west foundation trench for the new build at the front of the site was watched and the other foundation trenches for the same new house were examined after they had been excavated.

4 RESULTS

4.1 The 'Ruin' (Figure 2)

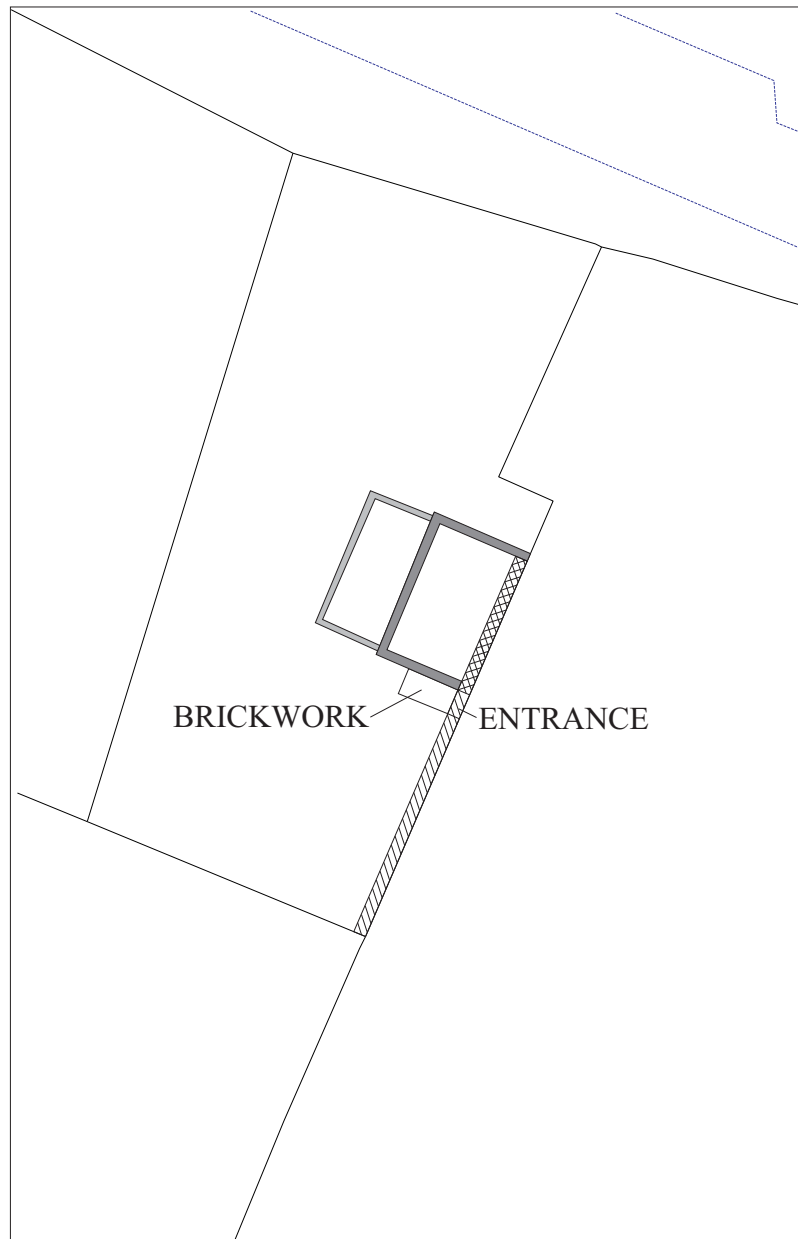
The building was found to be in three parts.

Originally the plot boundary wall which later formed the east wall of the building was 550mm wide. A building was butted up against this. At a later date the plot boundary wall fell into disrepair and was rebuilt only where necessary as the east wall of the building. The foundations of this wall were wider at 750mm. This was butted up against the end of the south wall and against the south face of the end of the north wall. This indicates that either the original plot boundary wall did not extend further to the north or that there was an entrance through the boundary wall at this point. Either when the new east wall was built or at a later date, an entrance immediately to the south of the building was formed. This was 950mm wide. The width of the entrance way had a brick surface 800mm deep (east/west) that must have lead to the cool store for the milk round found during the evaluation.

The original building had walls 400mm wide on foundations 550mm wide. The external width (east/west) of the original building was 3.45m and length (north/south) 5m. At a later date, whether before or after the rebuild of the east wall is unknown, the building was extended to the west with the new build abutted against the original west wall. The external width of this new build was 2.2m. The foundations for this extension were narrower at 450mm. The footings for this extension extended 500mm below present ground level.

4.2 The Foundation Trenches (Figure 1)

The footings trenches were excavated to a depth of 1m, to reveal the underlying limestone corn brash. The natural geology was overlain by a 0.40m thick deposit of



0 m 10 m





-  PHASE 1
-  PHASE 2
-  PHASE 3
-  PHASE 4

Figure 2. Building phases of the 'Ruin' 5

mid to dark yellow brown silty loam with 25% limestone rubble, CBM, charcoal and tree roots. This was overlain by a 0.25m thick deposit of mid brown silty loam, this represents the existing topsoil. No archaeological features were seen or recorded during the work.

No traces of the wall seen in evaluation trenches 2 and 3 were apparent in the sides of the foundation trenches.

5 DISCUSSION

A few more details on the evolution and construction of the ruined building were added by this watching brief.

The watching brief confirmed the absence of any medieval activity.

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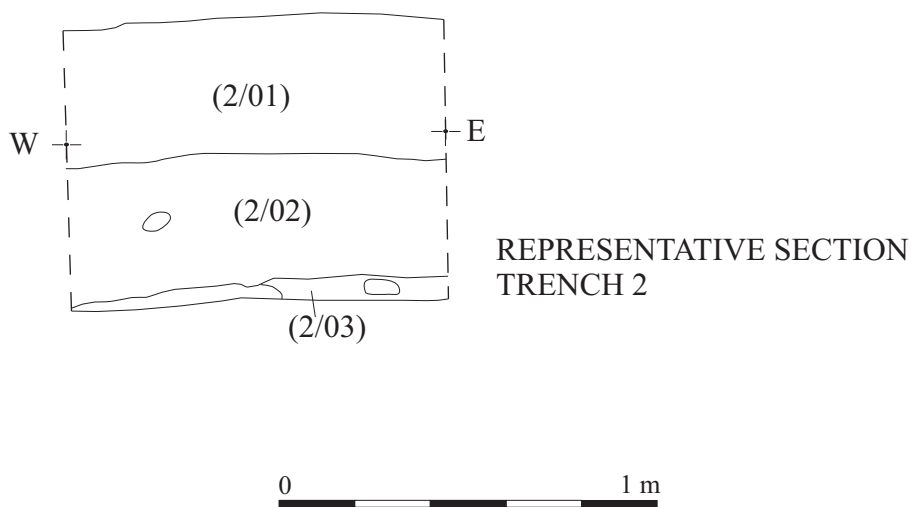
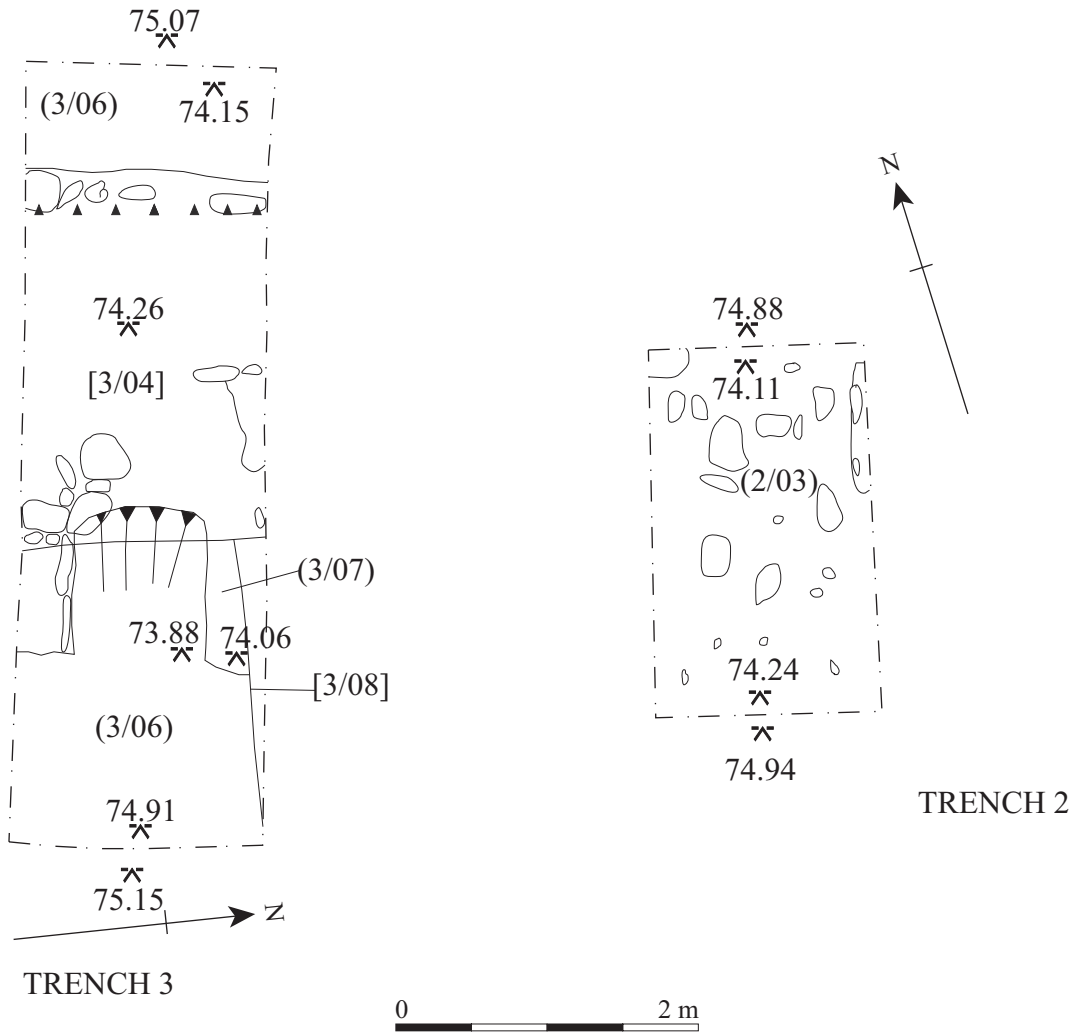


Figure 3. Trenches 2 and 3