

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT

55 MAIN ROAD, MIDDLETON CHENEY, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE OX17 2LU NGR (SP 50456 41765)

FEBRUARY 2020

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SUMMARY

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at 55 Main Road, Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 50456 41765). The purpose was for the construction of a single dwelling. This particular area had potential for remains pertaining to the early medieval and medieval periods, including the potential for human remains. However, during the course of the watching brief, no archaeological features were or remains were discovered from these periods; only a single early 20th century pit feature.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located on the south side of Main Road, Middleton Cheney (NGR SP 50456 41765). The site lies at approximately 130m OD and is within a garden adjacent to 55 Main Road. The geology is Dyrham Formation Siltstone and Mudstone.

1.2 Planning Background

South Northamptonshire Council granted planning permission for a proposed new single dwelling. 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.

Condition 4 states that: No development shall take place until the applicant (or their agents or successors in title) has submitted to and had approved in writing by the local planning authority a programme of archaeological work consisting of a written scheme of investigation and a timetable for that work. The development shall thereafter proceed in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation and timetable.

Reason: To secure the provision of archaeological investigation and the subsequent recording of the remains, to comply with Government advice in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Section 16). This information is required prior to commencement of the development as it is fundamental to the acceptability of the scheme.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site lies in an area of known historic settlement, and Main Road is thought to be part of a historic road route. On the opposite side of the road is Lexton House, a Grade II listed building which dates from the late 17th century.

A short distance to the east, human remains were found during development works and subsequently dated to the late 7th to early 9th century. Two ditches containing 11-12th century pottery were also found.

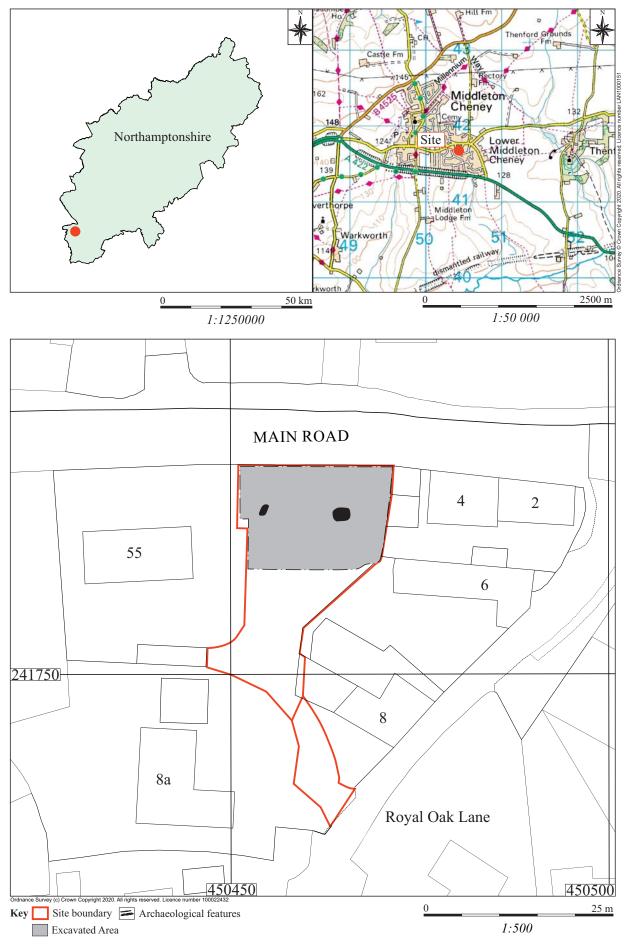


Figure 1: Site location

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 significant archaeological remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb, destroy or reveal archaeological remains.

In particular:

- To attempt to establish the date, nature and extent of any previous activity or occupation on the development site.
- To establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes and the present use of the site.
- To recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region.
- To recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions as an intrinsic part of the investigation.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Assistant Archaeological Advisor of the Northamptonshire County Council. The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

3.2 Methodology

The groundworks consisted of a sub-rectangular shaped area that measured 20m by 13.60m. This area was reduced down by a maximum thickness of 0.97m, the deepest point being in the western part of the site, with a minimum reduction of 0.70m. Due to the compact area of the site, there was not enough space to pile the spoil outside of the excavation area. As a result, the spoil had to be constantly relocated within the site area so that the full extent could be examined. Additionally, a narrow service trench for the application of cables was observed running north/north-east by south/south-west along the eastern extent of the site area.

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 the early medieval and medieval periods.

4 RESULTS (Figure 2, Plate 1)

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.

A sub-rectangular site area measuring 20m by 13.60m was reduced down by a maximum thickness of 0.97m. The earliest deposit recorded was a compact, light yellowy-brown, clay mudstone (102). This was identified as being the underlying geology, it had a thickness greater than 0.38m (Fig.2, Section 1; Plate 1), and was observed throughout the full extent of the site area. A few larger pieces of mudstone were observed within the north-eastern corner of the site area.

Cutting into the geology layer (102) was an early 20th century refuse pit 103. This pit was observed towards the western part of the site, located 2.80m from the western baulk. It measured 1.60m in length and 0.80m in width. The depth of this pit measured 0.05m, it was observed in plan (Fig. 2, Plan 1) to be roughly oval in shaped with rounded edges. The base of this pit was flat, with shallow, fairly irregular sides. This pit also had a gradual break-of-slope at the top and at the base. Due to the shallow nature of the pit, and the modern material that was recovered, this pit was not recorded in section, and was only recorded in plan (Fig. 2, Plan 1).

Refuse pit 103 had a single, primary fill, which was comprised of friable, dark-brown clayey-silt (104). It contained inclusions of infrequent rooting and it also contained a varying amount of refuse material; pottery, glass, iron scrap (Fe) as well as brick and rubble material. These finds suggest that pit 103 was used as a refuse pit, and has been associated with the garden plots that have been the primary use of this site area. These finds were not retained as they were dated on site to the early 20th century.



Plate 1: Representative Section 1.

Overlying the geology (102), towards the eastern part of the site was a deposit of friable to firm, mid-brown silty clay (105), comprising of less than 20% silt. It measured 2.10m by 1.55m, and was less than 0.03m in thickness, it was located

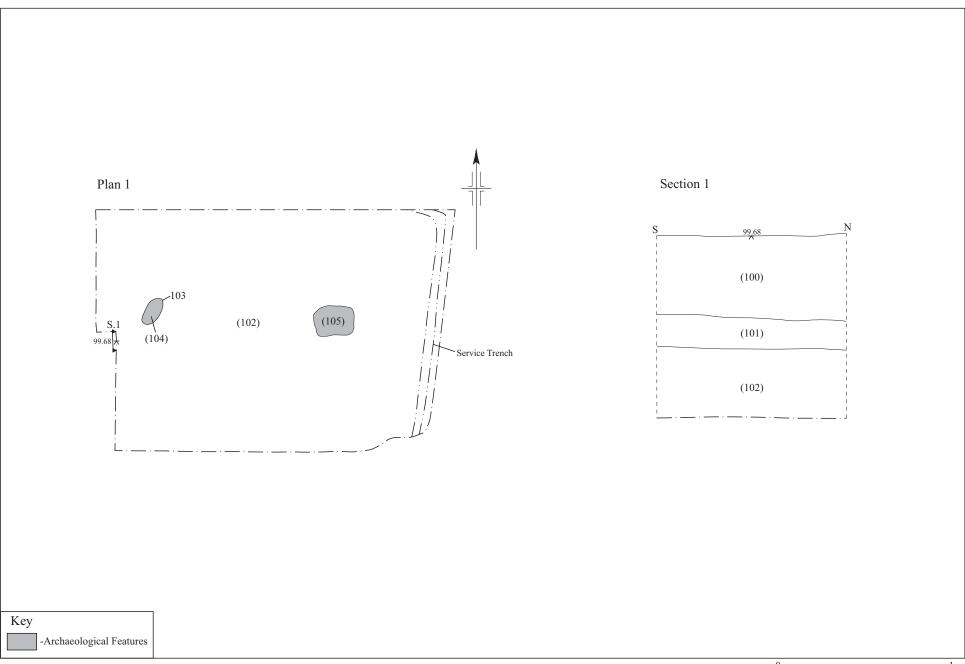


Figure 2: Plan 1 and Section 1.

c. 8.70m to the east of refuse pit 103 (Fig. 2, Plan 1). This deposit contained rare charcoal flecks, as well as small pieces of pottery and glass. It was shaped fairly irregularly in plan (Fig. 2, Plan 1), and was determined not to be within a cut feature.

Deposit (105) was likely the result of discarded refuse material. The pottery and glass that were uncovered were very similar to those discovered within fill (104) of the refuse pit 103. As a result, these were not retained, and were also dated to the early 20th century.

Stratified above both the early 20th century refuse pit 103 and deposit (105), was a deposit of firm, mid reddish-brown silty-clay (101). It contained inclusions of infrequent rooting. This deposit measured 0.18m in thickness (Fig. 2, Section 1; Plate 1), and was observed throughout the full extent of the site area. This deposit was identified as being a subsoil layer.

The latest deposit observed was a friable, dark-brown, clayey-silt-loam (100). This deposit contained infrequent root inclusions, and measured 0.46m in thickness (Fig.2, Section 1; Plate 1). This deposit was identified as being the modern garden soil/topsoil material, and was observed throughout the full extent of the site area.

4.2 Reliability of Results

The reliability of the results is considered to be good; however, the archaeological observations took place in damp and overcast conditions.

5 FINDS

No archaeological material prior to the early 20th century was identified during the course of the fieldwork, modern refuse material that was observed was not retained.

6 DISCUSSION

The watching brief aimed to identify the existence of significant archaeological remains. However, during the course of the fieldwork, the only archaeological features or remains that were uncovered were a single early 20th century refuse pit.

7 ARCHIVE

A Digital Archive is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services (ID 4136) and will be made available upon request (to admin@jmheritageservices.co.uk). Digitised copies of all the primary records will be made publicly available as appendix to the Final Report submitted to OASIS (ID johnmoor1-384424).

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014 Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs

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Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014 Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs

John Moore Heritage Services, 2019, S/2019/0728/FUL – 55 Main Road, Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire OX17 2LU. Archaeological Watching Brief. Written Scheme of Investigation. Unpublished.

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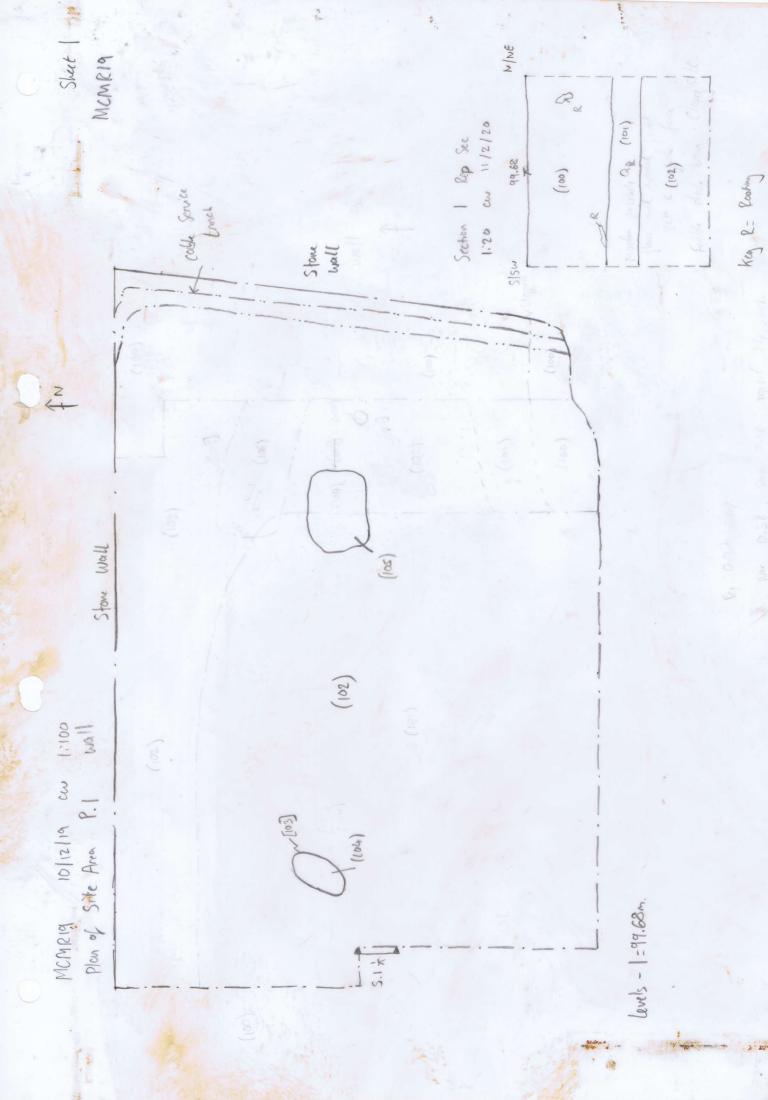
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General view of the stripped area



Modern pit 103



Representative Section