

**JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**OLD MOAT FARM,**

**STOKE MANDEVILLE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

**SP 8276 1040**

*On behalf of*

*BSA Chesters Limited.*

**AUGUST 2008**

**REPORT FOR**

Mr. Richard Sellers  
37 High Street  
Long Crendon  
Buckinghamshire  
HP18 9AL

**PREPARED BY**

Clare Roberts

**FIELDWORK**

7 April, 7 May, 3 and 15 July 2008

**REPORT ISSUED**

29 August 2008

**ENQUIRES TO**

*John Moore Heritage Services  
Hill View  
Woodperry Road  
Beckley  
Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ*

*Tel/Fax 01865 358300*

*Email [info@jmheritageservices.co.uk](mailto:info@jmheritageservices.co.uk)*

**Site Code;**

SMONF08

**JMHS Project No:**

1873

**County Museums Accession No.**

...

## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b><i>SUMMARY</i></b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Site Location	
1.2 Planning Background	
1.3 Archaeological Background	
<b>2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3 STRATEGY</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1 Research Design	
3.2 Methodology	5
<b>4 RESULTS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5 FINDS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6 DISCUSSION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7 BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>6</b>
Figure 1      Site Location	4
Figure 2      Section through moat	6
Figure 3      Section through moat	6

## **Summary**

*A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation of patio and extension footings next to the house; and a sewerage trench running from the house. This ran into the centre of the moat area of the medieval moated site. Fills of the moat were recorded. The moat appears to have been kept open until at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century according to the maps; and finds from within the moats fill included metal sheeting, which seems to confirm this date.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The site is located in Marsh Lane, Stoke Mandeville, Buckinghamshire at NGR SP 8276 1040. It is around 90m OD. Geologically the site is situated in an area of Gault Clay deposits.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Aylesbury Vale District Council granted planning permission for internal and external alterations to Old Moat Farm, Stoke Mandeville. This includes reduction of ground levels and new drains and sewerage disposal. Due to the potential for archaeological remains to be present on the site a condition was attached to the permission requiring the carrying out of an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the new construction. Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) prepared a Brief for the work, and a separate Brief was also prepared for the Old Moat Farm building recording.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The Domesday Book records that Remigius the Bishop of Lincoln holds Stoke (Mandeville); it answers for 8 hides with land for 21 ploughs. There are 20 villagers 3 slaves, 4 small holders who have 15 ploughs and 1 mill at 10s. Bishop Wulfwy held the manor before 1066 (Morris 1978).

In 1639 another Edward Brudenell conveyed the manor of Stoke Mandeville to Thomas Harbore. By 1712 Thomas Jackson was in possession of the manor which was afterwards held by the Clarkes of Ardington who sold it to Charles Lucas of Aylesbury in 1790. In 1861 it was still in the Lucas family.

A manor in Stoke Mandeville called Oldbury was held by William de Kirkeby's wife, Christiana in the reign of Edward I (1272-1307) and by William Morton in 1392. William de Kirkeby is also recorded to have owned the Manor of Newbury in the same parish. By around 1425 it was held by Edward Brudenell. It is also recorded that the Brudenell family held both Manors from around the mid 1400's up to 1628. This was when it was passed to Christopher Parkins and his heirs; however this may have been part of a settlement, as they were also recorded to have been sold in 1639 to Thomas Harborne. The names Newbury and Oldbury had disappeared by 1813. The sites of these manors are not now known (VCH 1969).

Medieval house platforms and a possible moated site are located 400m to the north at Hall End (CASS 1124). This was held by William de Kirkeby in the reign of Edward I (1272-1307). Possible fishponds are recorded 400m NW (CASS 2471); further earthworks including a house platform and boundary ditch lie 500m SE (CASS 2472). A homestead moat is seen on aerial photographs 300m to the south-east (CASS 0415). Ridge and furrow is notable on aerial photographs in all the fields surrounding the site.

The reported site of the manor of Oldbury lies 400m east of the building (CASS 2924). Medieval pottery finds have been located in the area some 400m NNE (CASS 0939). The Church of St. Mary built in 1866 is 700m east of the farm.

The farm appears on Jeffery's Map of 1770. On the Inclosure Map of 1779 the moated area is open on the south eastern side with a presumed fishpond connected to the northwest. The land surrounding it is held by William Windham, Lord Grenville. The first edition 1:10560 OS map of 1885 records the buildings as Lower Farm. It appears to have had substantially more buildings than depicted on the 1995 OS 1:25000 map. Most of the field boundaries appear unchanged, but some fields have been reduced in size or split into several packages.

The house is a rectangular building of two storeys with a projecting wing on the NE side. It is built of timber and bricks late in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and restored and enlarged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (RCHM 1912). The walls are now almost entirely covered with cement, the roofs are tiled. The large central chimney stack is of original thin bricks. One room has two large moulded beams in the ceiling, a wide fireplace with brick jams and moulded stone four centred head with plain spandrels. The moat has an entrance off the north-west arm (RCHM 1912).

Samples of the oak beams from the two first floor bedrooms were dendrochronologically analysed. The subsequent report concluded that the likely construction of the building was 1499 or just after (Bridge 2007).

The threshing barn at Moat Farm is described as unique to the district as it had the original *Mowstead* in the central Aisle (Dell and Pearce 1992).

The site lies within an area of significant archaeological activity. Extensive field walking has taken place in fields to the north of the site. The closest field was 400m away, the other lay up to 1km away. Scatters of Mesolithic and Neolithic flint work were located as were large quantities of pottery dating from the Iron Age through the Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods (CASS 5495, 5496, 5497, 5640, 5641 and 5642),

A 204 trench evaluation conducted by Wessex Archaeology to the north of the site in the same area recorded isolated features dated to the Middle and Late Bronze Age and two separate Roman sites both of 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century date. All features had been heavily truncated by ploughing.

An Iron Age coin was recovered from the parish (CASS 1170) although its exact find location is not known. Large quantities of Roman pottery have been recovered from the allotments 400m to the east (CASS 6369). This includes quantities of Oxford and

White Wares. Other finds of Roman pottery (CASS 1020) and coins (CASS 1779) are known from the parish.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

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

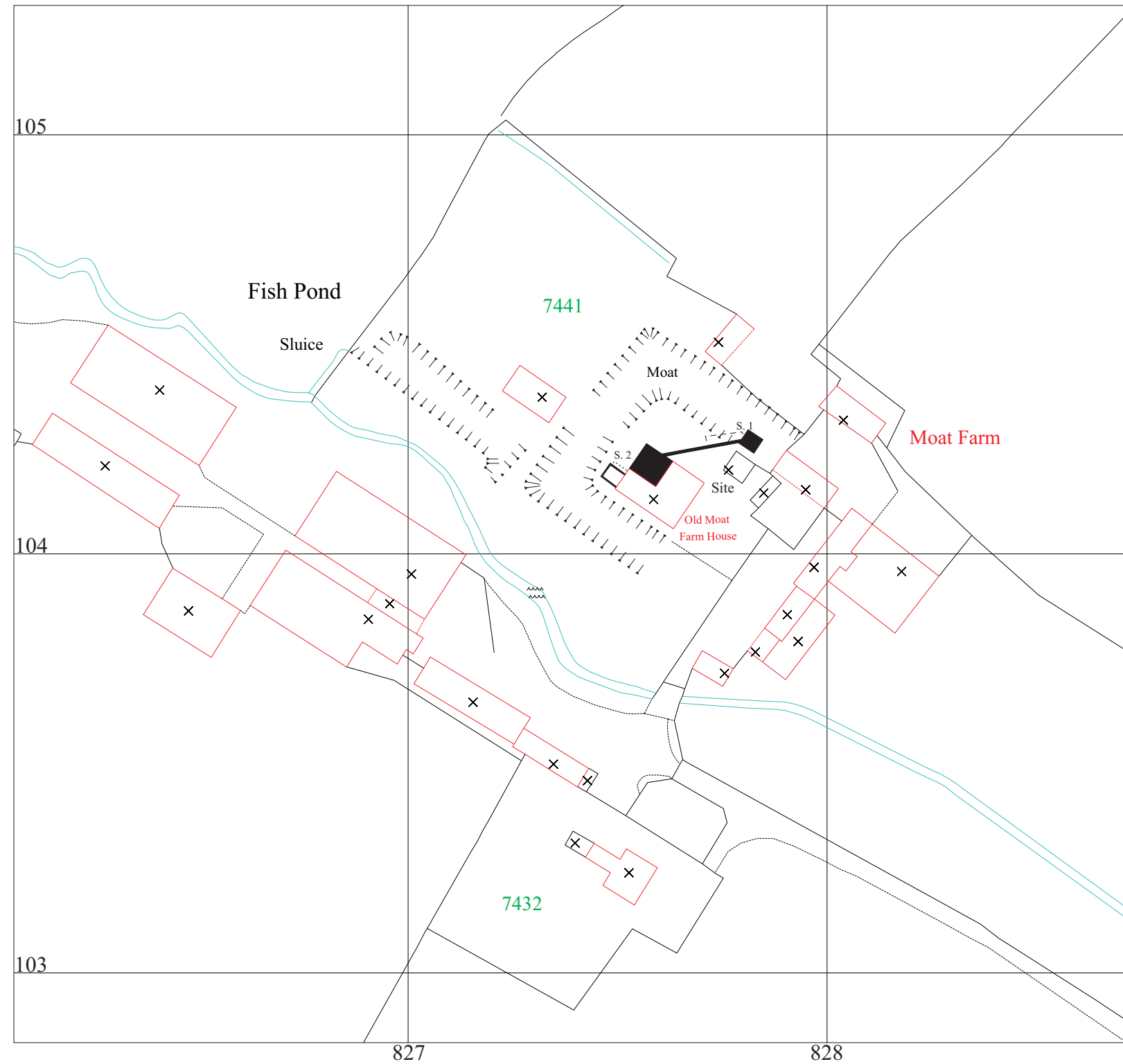
- To identify and record any archaeological remains revealed by the groundworks by the ground reduction and excavation for the new drains and sewerage disposal.
- In particular:
  - to record any evidence of medieval and later outbuildings and associated activity relevant to the development of the moated farm.
  - To determine the relationship between the building and its immediate environs.
- To make the results of the investigations public.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

BCAS issued a Brief for the work, which John Moore Heritage Services carried out to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with BCAS, on behalf of the local planning authority. 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.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).



© Crown Copyright 2008. All rights reserved. Licence number 100020449



Figure 1. Site location

### 3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist continuously monitored the excavation the patio floor area; the sewerage trench which ran east from the house, into the centre of the moat; and also the small extension to the north-western corner of the house. All the recording was carried out in good weather conditions.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate.

## 4 RESULTS (Figs 1 and 2)

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [ ] indicate features i.e. cuts; while numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material.

Excavation of the new patio was on the northern side of the house, flanked by the house on its south-western and south-eastern sides. It involved removing the original concrete patio, and then lowering the ground level by around 0.4m for the foundations of the new floor surface. The concrete patio foundations (**01**) were around 0.2m deep and consisted of brick and tile rubble within a brown sandy clay matrix. This overlay a friable creamy-yellow chalky/mortar like layer with flint gravel inclusions (**02**), which was between 0.1-0.2m thick. This in turn overlay the grey clay natural which contained occasional sandstone fragments (**03**).

The service trench leading to the sewerage tank ran in an easterly direction from the house for a distance of approximately 21m from the edge of the patio area, to the area on the north-eastern side of the garage. The tank was positioned within the moat depression. The section of the service trench, and a section of the hole excavated for the tank was recorded. The uppermost layer was the topsoil, (**04**), which consisted of a 0.1m thick, friable dark-grey brown silty clay layer, with small rounded chalk and flint inclusions. This overlay a loose-friable sandy clay, with brick and tile fragments, and chalk and flint rubble (**05**), this was 0.3m thick towards the house, thinning out to nothing about 2.5m away from the edge of the patio. Under this lay the subsoil, (**06**), friable, grey-black silty clay with small chalk flecks and flint gravel inclusions. It was 0.18m thick, seen from the edge of the original patio area, and extended for 6m before thinning out and becoming impossible to define from the moat fill. The moat [**07**] cut the natural; it started around 13.5m from the edge of the patio, along the sewerage trench. The cut for the moat sloped down at an angle of 45 degrees, although the cut was not seen beyond a depth of 0.55m as this was the limit of excavation for the service trench. The full depth of the moat was established when the trench for the sewerage tank was excavated; where it was found to be 1.3m deep. In this area the moat had a flat base, and was filled with black-grey silty clay (**08**). This fill became blacker towards the base, and contained some wood fragments, some rusting sheet metal, and what looked like farm machinery fragments. This overlay the natural (**10**), given a separate number as it was a pure grey-blue clay layer at this deeper level.

The foundations of the extension to the house were excavated on the north-western end, incorporating the back-door porch / bread oven area. The area around was



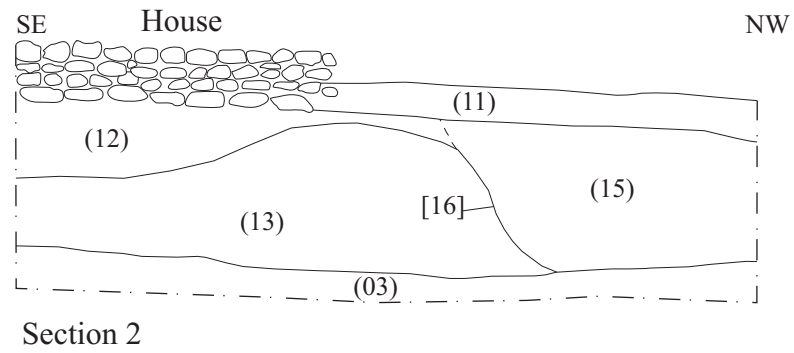
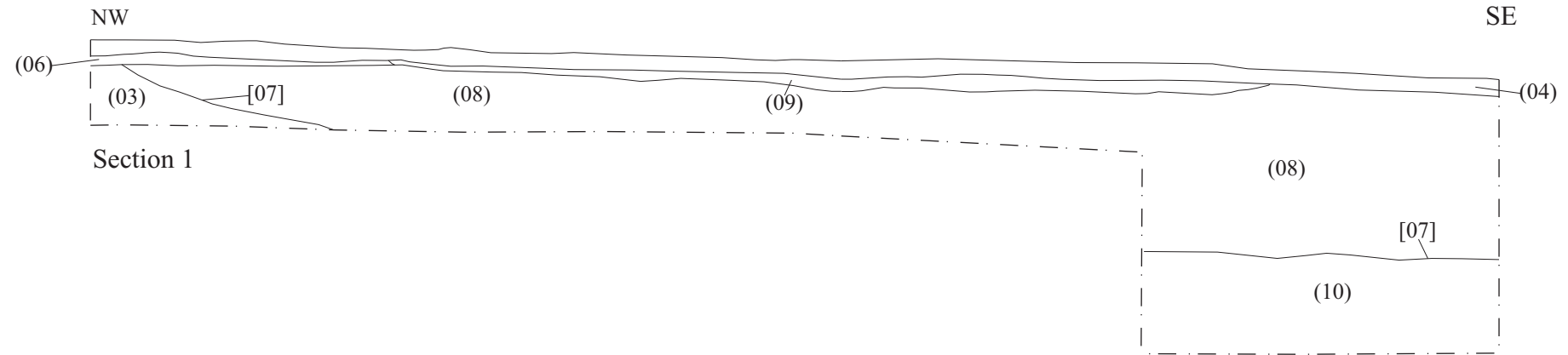


Figure 2. Sections

originally part of the concrete patio, which had been removed already. It came down directly onto quite a substantial (0.2m thick) sub-soil layer, friable dark brown sandy silt (11). This was cut by the foundations of the wall for the porch / bread oven extension on the house. The wall here also cut (12), a layer of friable dark brown silty clay which had chalk and charcoal inclusions. This had also possibly been cut by [16], a steep sided feature, which came down to a flat base at the top of the natural. [16] was filled by (15), silty blackish-brown fill. It was 0.75m deep in this area. Feature [16] also cut through very soft and friable dark grey-brown clay layer (13), which had inclusions of charcoal, shells and roof tile. This in turn overlay the natural grey clay (03).

## 5 FINDS

No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The chalky-mortar layer (02) seen within the patio area could be interpreted as an old floor surface, possibly originally internal, as the construction workers reported having seen a similar fabric floor within the house. No old wall foundations were seen however, although this is probably due to the area being disturbed by the laying of the concrete patio floor.

The brick and tile rubble layer (01) could be interpreted as being the same as the rubble layer seen in the service trench section, (05); although this layer did extend beyond the limit of the original concrete patio area. It could therefore be part of a disturbed demolition layer, left over from the removal of buildings originally situated within the moat. No dateable fragments of brick or tile were recovered, so this cannot be confirmed.

The grey brown clay layer (13) seen in the foundation section for the extension to the house, could be interpreted as either a layer of old redeposited natural from the excavation of the moat; or possibly a redeposited layer from clearing out the silted up moat at some later stage. The tile observed from this layer was not retained, so dating this layer is impossible at this stage. The layer above (12) could be a levelling layer for the construction of the extension to the house.

The cut for the moat seems to differ between [07], on the north-eastern side of the house; and [16] on the north-western side. [07] is a more gradual sloping cut in the upper parts, leading to a step down with a vertical drop to form the main moat. The north-western end seems to show the moat cut steps down to a depth of 0.75m at first, presumably stepping down again for the main moat, although the other side of feature [16] was not seen, so this cannot be confirmed. The fill of the possible moat in this area was not as silty as within (08), and it also cuts a possible layer of redeposited natural (13) from the excavation of the original moat; indicating it may be a later extension of the moat. The moat fills on the north-eastern end, (08); had a relatively uniform colour that indicates it was filled gradually, silting up over time. The Post Medieval and Modern finds observed within all but the lowest level of the fill imply that it was kept open until the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is also supported by the map evidence, where the 1885 map still indicates the house surrounded by a moat. The bottom fill of the moat was a lot darker, although no clear boundary between this and the lighter upper was visible. This could be earlier silting of the moat, although it

was too deep an excavation to be able to verify this, or take a sample, particularly as it also began to fill with water quite quickly.

## **8 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994 *Standard and Guidance for  
Archaeological Field Evaluations*

VCH 1969 Buckinghamshire volume 2