

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**MANOR FARM, HIGH STREET, SOULDERN,**

**OXFORDSHIRE**

**SP 5207 3165**

*On behalf of*

*S & S Construction Ltd*

**AUGUST 2009**

**REPORT FOR** S & S Construction Ltd  
Unit C  
Bourton Business Centre  
Bourton Road  
Buckingham  
MK18 7DS

**PREPARED BY** John Moore

**ILLUSTRATION BY** Eoin Fitzsimons

**FIELDWORK** 24<sup>th</sup> September – 26<sup>th</sup> May 2009

**REPORT ISSUED** 10<sup>th</sup> August 2009

**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** SOMF 09  
**JMHS Project No:** 1998  
**Archive Location** The archive is currently held by JMHS and will be deposited with Oxford Museum Service in due course under accession number: 2008.94

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<b><i>SUMMARY</i></b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
<b>2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3 STRATEGY</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	3
<b>4 RESULTS</b>	<b>3</b>
4.1 Results	3
4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results	5
<b>5 FINDS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6 DISCUSSION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>7 BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>6</b>
 <b>FIGURES</b>	
<b>Figure 1</b> Site Location	<b>2</b>
<b>Figure 2</b> Plan of cremation pit	<b>4</b>

## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for a development comprising new residential dwellings. A 'Belgic' urn was found that probably contained a cremation. This tradition is given a date-range of AD20-100 in the region.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The development site was located on the northern edge of the village of Souldern at Manor Farm, lying to the north of High Street (NGR SP 5207 3165). The underlying geology is Northampton Sand Beds and the site lies at approximately 110m OD. The site previously was in use as a farmyard with concrete slabs and a number of farm buildings.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Cherwell District Council granted planning permission under planning application number 04/01604/F for the demolition of agricultural buildings and part of outbuildings, conversion of existing barns to form two new dwellings, conversion of outbuildings to form garaging and the erection of 4 new dwellings. Due to the potential disturbance of archaeological features a condition was attached requiring that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during the period of groundworks. This is in line with PPG 16 and Local Plan Policies. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services prepared a *Brief* for such archaeological work.

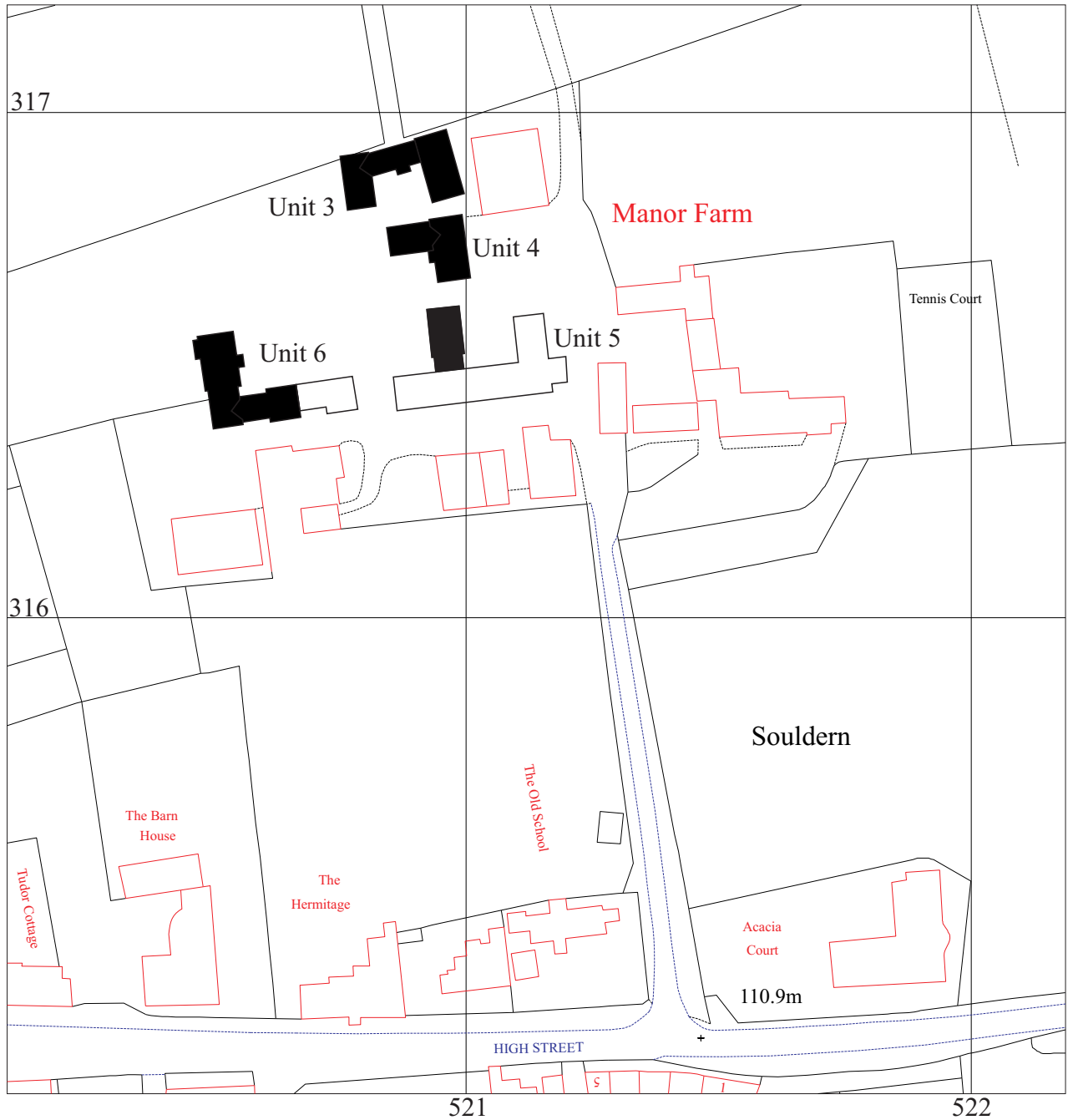
The conversion of the stone cruck barn will take place at a later date and will be the subject of a separate report.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

Souldern appears to have had a polyfocal settlement with one focus of activity centred on the church (Oxon Historic Environment Record 4823; SP 5230 3169) and the medieval manor house site and fishponds (HER 4824; SP 5233 3178) to the east and another focus of settlement now only evidenced by earthworks, at the west end of the present High Street (HER 9573; SP 5166 3150). The last includes ridge and furrow, platforms and holloways. A watching brief found a small medieval building enclosing a tank and drain with 12<sup>th</sup> century pottery. It was close to two ditches and a quarry.

Roman finds (HER 2772) have been found in the parish with J H Gough reporting that 'more recently (*than 1871*) upon a farm, the property of Mr J R Crook, were discovered coins of... as well as some tesserae and a small bronze figure'. This may have been a site of a villa. A minor Roman road (Portway), from Akeman Street at the NW corner of Kirtlington Park towards Kings Sutton passes to the east of Souldern.

In the west end of the village an Anglo Saxon cremation cemetery has been found (HER 1596, SP 5192 3145).



0 m 50 m

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 any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.
- To record any evidence of remains relating to the medieval settlement of Souldern.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the client and Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services, on behalf of Cherwell District Council. 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).

### **3.2 Methodology**

Ground reduction for Units 3, 4 and 6 were observed. As this was to, or into, undisturbed ground no further groundworks in these areas was observed. The foundation trenches for the extension for the conversion of Unit 5 were inspected after excavation (Fig. 1).

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. 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**

### **4.1 Results (Figure 2)**

The natural undisturbed ground was pale blue-grey slightly sandy clay with orange clay for Units 3 and 4. In the area of Unit 5 the ground was pale yellow clayey sand with sandstone outcropping at the SW corner of the extension (context 2). The sand continued to the area of Unit 6 where it was a soft orange brown silty sand (5).

Overly the natural was made ground forming the base for farmyard surfaces. This comprised earth, pieces of limestone, brick and small stone (1) and varied in thickness

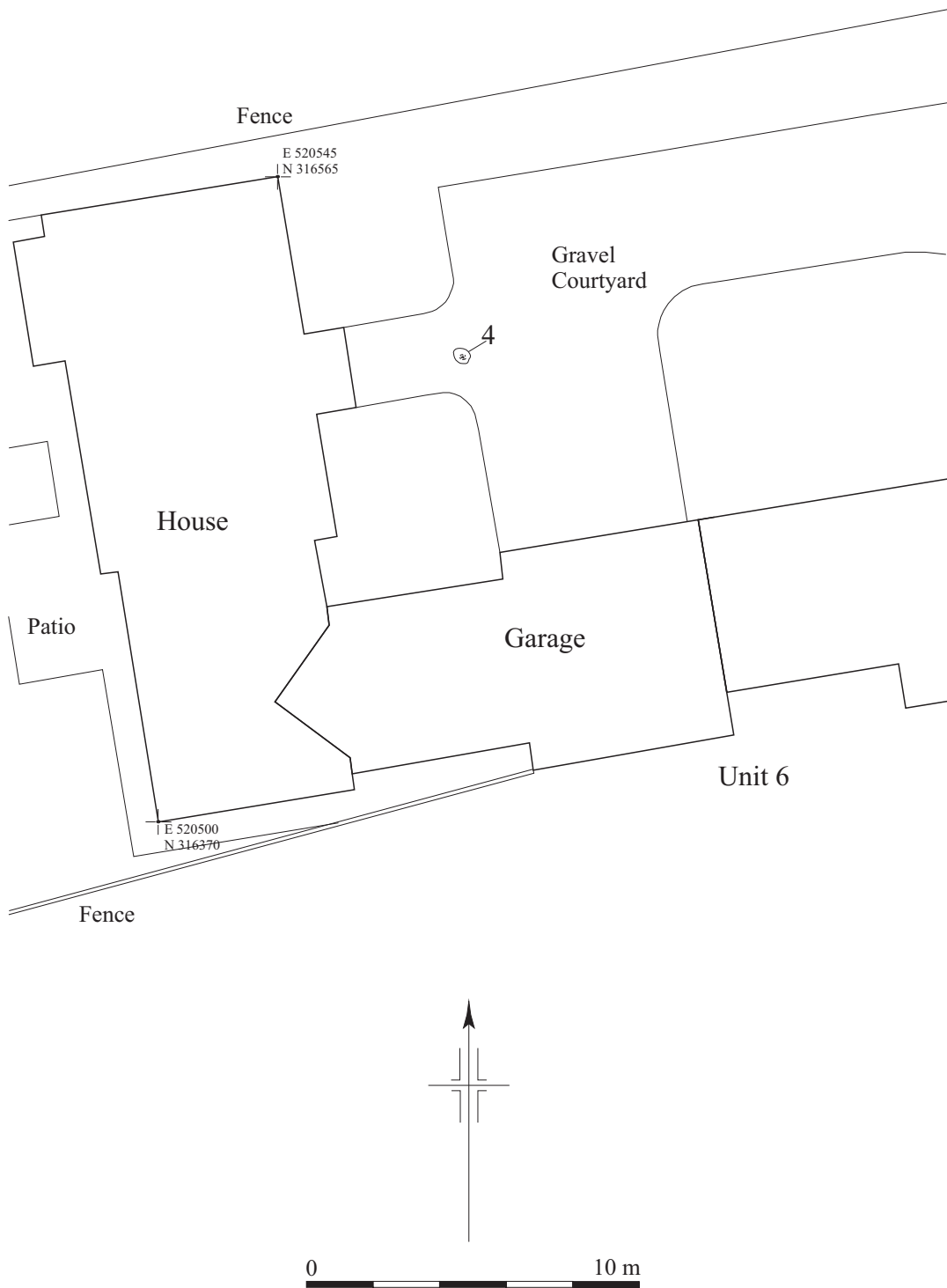


Figure 2. Plan of cremation pit

from 300mm to 700mm forming a level base. No finds other than modern material were seen.

During ground reduction for Unit 6 a pottery vessel was disturbed (Fig. 2). This was contained within a circular cut of *c.* 500mm diameter and depth. The cut had a sharp break of slope at the top, a gradual break of slope at the base, concave sides and a flat base (4). The fill of the cut was soft dark-mid orange-brown silty sand with darker patches (3). The top of the pit had been truncated by later activity resulting in the urn contained in the pit being broken. No cremated bone was found associated with the pot but this is probably due to the disturbance caused by the vessel being found during machining.

## 4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The watching brief was conducted under good conditions.

## 5 FINDS

### A 'Belgic' Cremation Urn by *Paul Blinkhorn*

The probable cremation was contained within a wheel-thrown, 'Belgic' jar. The fabric comprised sparse to moderate angular pale orange-pink grog up to 1mm, most 0.5mm or less, with rare to sparse sub-rounded calcareous fragments up to 2mm, most less than 1mm. This is typical of the pottery of the period in the area, and the Upper Thames region generally, and can be paralleled at a number of sites nearby, such as Slade Farm (Woodward and Marley 2000) and Oxford Road (Booth 1997). A number of jars with similar forms to this were noted at the latter (*ibid.* Fig. 6). The tradition is given a date-range of AD20-100 in the region (Booth 1997, 78-82).

The vessel is dark grey, with generally light brown-grey surfaces, with darker grey patches. It is incomplete, with 65% of the rim (diameter = 120mm) and 70% of the base (diameter 70mm) present. Around 25% of the body is missing. It is 220mm high. The vessel has a single hole in the neck, drilled post-firing, but there is no corresponding hole on the opposite side of the vessel. The rim above the hole is missing, but it is entirely possible that it represents an attempt at a repair to the vessel, and the missing rimsherd had a similar hole, and was wired in place or tied with leather cords. There is no trace of any adhesive.

Jars with cordon decoration are a very common in the 'Belgic' tradition, and although this pot has a somewhat squatter form, it is similar to the cordoned vessel used as a container for one of the cremations from Kingston Blount, Oxfordshire (Crawford 1975).

## 6 DISCUSSION

A single 'belgic' jar was found within a small pit. This was probably a cremation. It is unlikely that this was a single event and others may exist in the vicinity. It is possible that others have been destroyed during the use of the site as a farmyard.



## 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Booth, P, 1997 Pottery and Other Ceramic Finds in C Mould, An Archaeological Excavation at Oxford Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire *Oxoniensia* **61**, 75-89

Crawford, RA, 1975 Two Belgic Cremations from Kingston Blount, Oxon. 1975 *Oxoniensia* **41**, 354-5

English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*

English Heritage 2006 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994 (revised 2001), *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Watching Brief*.

Woodward, A, and Marley, J, 2000 The Iron Age Pottery in P Ellis, G Hughes, and L Jones An Iron Age Boundary and Settlement Features at Slade Farm, Bicester, Oxfordshire *Oxoniensia* **65**, 233-48