



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**ELVENDON PRIORY, ELVENDON ROAD,**

**GORING-ON-THAMES, OXFORDSHIRE**

**SU 62432 81296**

*On behalf of*

*MGGR Ltd*

**MARCH 2009**

**REPORT FOR** MGGR Ltd  
c/o Jeffrey Charles Emmett Planning & Development  
Stable Court Studio  
12A Bell Lane  
Thame  
RG8 0LS

**PREPARED BY** John Moore

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**ENQUIRES TO** *John Moore Heritage Services  
Hill View  
Woodperry Road  
Beckley  
Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ  
Tel/Fax 01865 358300  
Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk*

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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out a watching brief during groundworks in two areas of the garden. Cultivation of terraces cut into the chalk to the rear of the present house appear to be of mid/late 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century date. These may have been part of a kitchen or herb garden to the rear of an associated building.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The proposed development site was located at Elvendon Priory on the south side of Elvendon Road between Goring-on-Thames and Woodcote (NGR SU 62432 81296). The underlying geology is the junction of Upper and Middle Chalk. The development areas are currently in use as a domestic residence and gardens.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

South Oxfordshire District Council granted listed building consent under planning application number P08/W0465/LB for the following: erection of a garden room, demolition of outbuildings, replacement green house, erection of potting shed and of wood chip store, alteration to garden walls and parking areas, alteration to main entrance walls, and lowering of ground floor level in part of main house. Due to the potential disturbance of archaeological features a condition (4) was attached requiring that a full archaeological watching brief be maintained during the period of groundworks. This was in line with PPG 16 and Policy CON3 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011. The archaeological work was carried out to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by John Moore Heritage Services and approved by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS)

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

While the property is called Elvendon Priory there is no documentary evidence that it was ever a priory. Traditionally it is on the site of a possession of Goring Priory. The present house, listed Grade II, retains some late medieval details (Sherwood & Pevsner 1974).

## **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.
- In particular to record any evidence of remains relating to the medieval holding of Goring Priory.

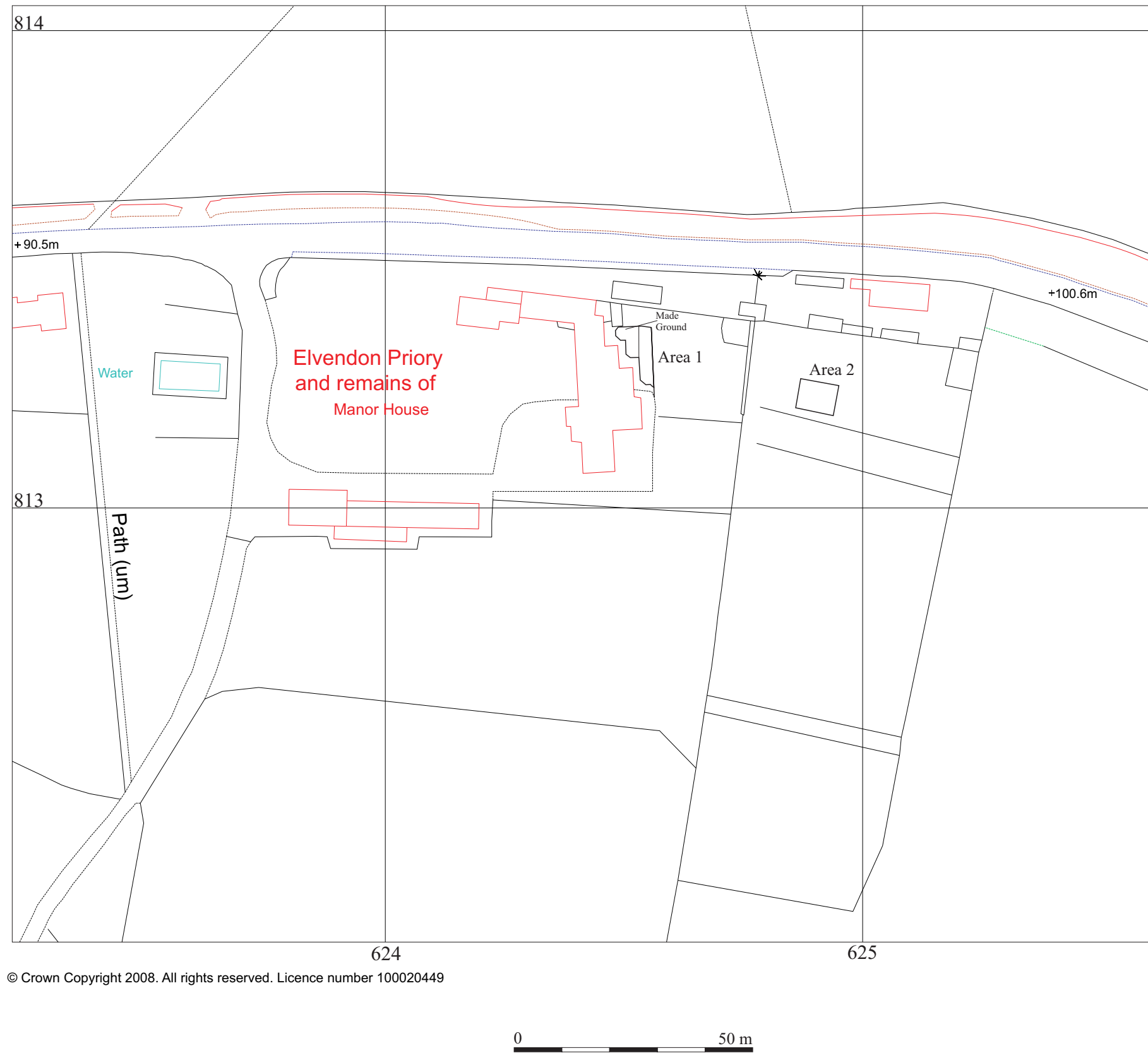


Figure 1. Site location and watching brief areas

### **3 STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the archaeological watching brief to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with OCAS.

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

#### **3.2 Methodology**

Within 2 the ground was inspected immediately after topsoil stripping. Other ground reduction was carried out under archaeological supervision. Area 1 was part of a terraced garden area that was reduced down to a level with the ground to the rear of the house. Area 2 was on sloping land and was terraced to create a level garden bed.

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 (Figure 2)**

In Area 1 the natural geological deposit was chalk with flint nodules (context number 04). The top of this was only 3500mm below the terraced garden level in the extreme north-east corner of the area. The chalk sloped down slightly to a point 2m west of the north-east corner where it had been terraced into. The terrace was 400mm deep and 600mm wide before a second terrace 150mm deep and 150mm wide before having been cut through for the original path to the rear of the house. These terraces extended *c.* 3m southwards before the chalk sloped down below the level of ground reduction.

Overlying the terrace steps was a subsoil of pale-grey brown slightly clayey silt with 20% flint nodules (03). This appears to have been a cultivation soil for level beds cut into the chalk. Above this, and directly overlying the chalk at its highest point, was a layer of colluvium that appeared to have been cultivated at some point as it contained the occasion piece of animal bone, brick and roof tile fragments and oyster shell in the top 50-100mm. The colluvium comprised orange-brown clayey silt with 5% flint gravel and 2% flint nodules (02) This was cut on the west side by the construction of the garden terracing wall foundation. It extended 5.5m south of the north side of the area before there was an area of disturbance and made ground. Overlying the colluvium and made ground was 500-580mm of imported topsoil. Made ground was present on the west and south sides behind the garden wall.

In Area 2 the lowest deposit seen was chalk (08) which was only partially exposed in the extreme south-east corner. Above this was a colluvial deposit of mid orange-brown very slightly clayey silt with 30% flint gravel (07). This had a minimum thickness of 150mm. Above the colluvium was a 250mm thick old cultivation soil composed of pale brown-grey clayey silt with 5% small stone (06). The uppermost

deposit was 300mm of topsoil (05). A fragment of possible Romano-British tile was recovered from the old cultivation layer.

## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Pottery and tile *by Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 2 sherds with a total weight of 20g. Both were medieval, and both occurred in context (03), a cultivation layer. They were recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXBF: North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD1050 – 1400. 1 sherd, 3g.

OXAG: Abingdon ware, mid/late 11<sup>th</sup> – mid 14<sup>th</sup> century. 1 sherd, 17g.

The sherd of Abingdon ware was from the rim of a glazed and slip-decorated jug, a typical product of the tradition. The fragment of OXBF was a plain bodysherd. They are likely to be of mid/late 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century date.

Two tile fragments weighing 9g occurred in context (06). One is of indeterminate date, but the other is gogged, and seems likely to be Romano-British.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The terrace steps cut into the chalk to the rear of the house and the associated cultivation soil indicate medieval activity on the site during the mid/late 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century date from the two sherds of pottery. It is likely that a house of that date preceded the current house with perhaps the terracing as part of a kitchen or herb garden.

It is known that Goring Priory was established during the reign of Henry I (1100-1135) from a confirmation charter issued about 1181 by Henry II to ‘the church of St Mary at Goring and the nuns of that place’. Various individuals gave land and churches to the priory at this time (VCH 1907) and it is probable that the land here was given at the same time. The land may well have had an existing building. Whether the building was rebuilt during the ownership by Goring Priory is unknown but the priory was relatively poor during the majority of its existence (ibid). There are ‘on-line’ anecdotal references to an 11<sup>th</sup> century building on this site but these may be due to the presumed link with the priory. However, the archaeology seems to support this idea. Again there are references to the present building having mid 15<sup>th</sup> century elements but by this time the number of sisters had declined and by at least 1517 the priory, owing to lawsuits, was too poor to keep the priory buildings in repair. Any major rebuilding of Elvendon Priory is likely to have occurred after the dissolution in 1535.

The possible piece of Romano-British tile may be of interest although it may have been imported onto the site.

## 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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