

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**LAND ADJACENT TO No. 1 THE CLOSE,**

**EPWELL, OXFORDSHIRE**

**SP 3523 4043**

*On behalf of*

*Harrison Projects Ltd*

**JANUARY 2010**

**REPORT FOR** Harrison Projects Ltd  
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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out a watching brief during surface stripping for a new residential dwelling. The only feature found was a small pit that may have been a modern planting pit.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The development site was located on the west side of the village, west of St Anne's Church and adjacent to No. 1 The Close (NGR SP 3523 4043). The underlying geology was Upper Lias and the site lies at approximately 182m OD. The developed area was formerly in use as a garden.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Planning permission was sought in March 2006 for the construction of a new dwelling and access under planning reference 06/00645/F. This was withdrawn in May 2006. A subsequent application under reference number 07/01322/F was approved in August 2007. Planning permission for a new dwelling was approved in August 2009 (09/01008/F). Due to the potential of the site to contain buried archaeological remains a condition was attached requiring that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during the period of groundworks. This was in line with PPG 16 and Cherwell District Local Plan policies. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a *Brief* for such archaeological work. 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)

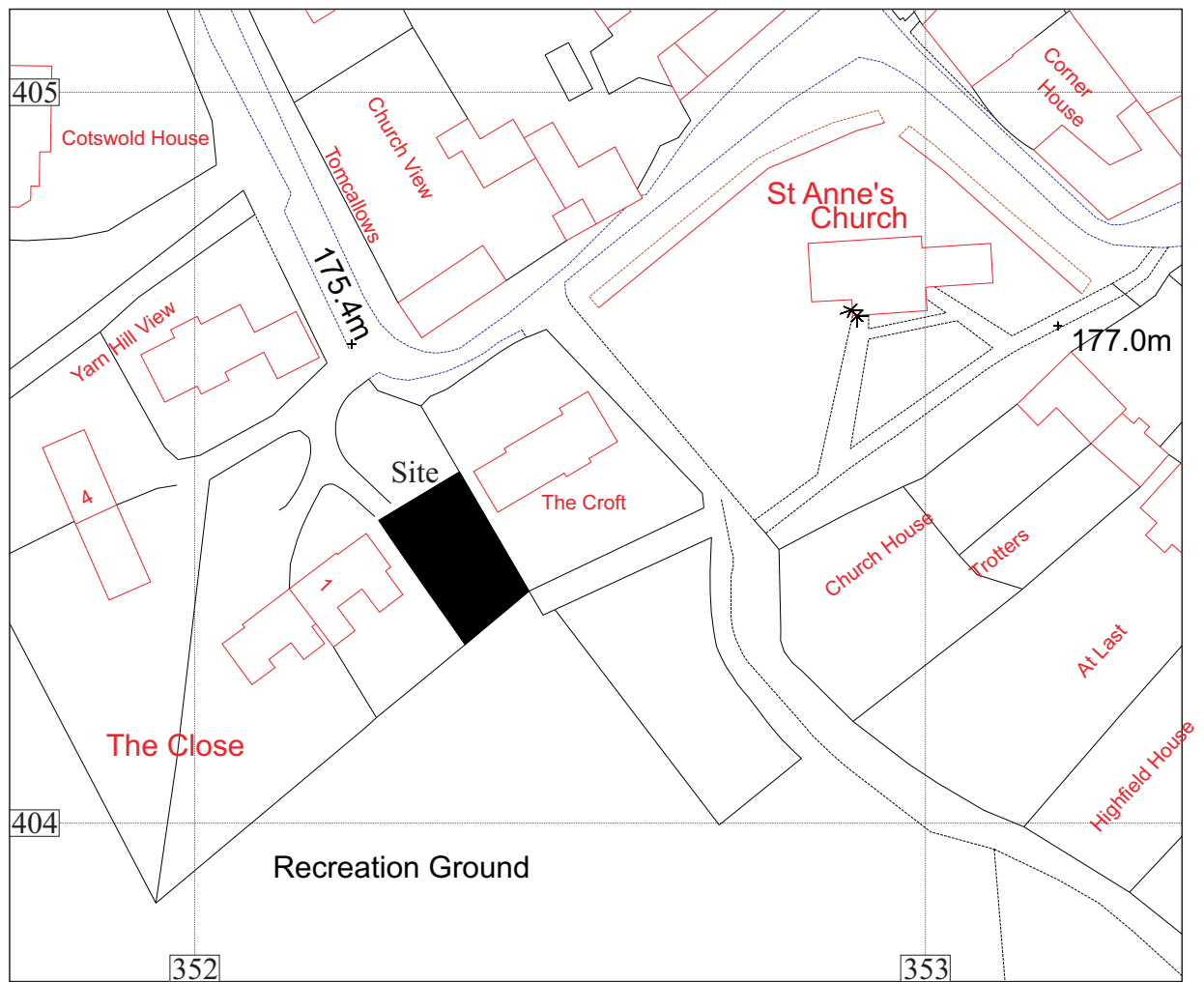
### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The development site was 70m to the west of St Anne's Church that lies within the historic core of Epwell. The place name suggests an early settlement with Epwell deriving from 'Eoppa's Well' or spring, and as such is likely to have its origins in the late Saxon period. The church (PRN 4558; SP 3529 4047), known to date from existing fabric to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, is likely to have formed a focus for the development of the early settlement in the village. A number of listed buildings on the eastern side of the church dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries also suggest that the church formed a focus of the settlement. The site was also located 140m to the east of the proposed route of a Roman road.

The archaeological background information was taken from the OCAS's Brief.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

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



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Figure 1. Site location

- 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 sub-surface remains relating to the medieval settlement of Epwell.

### **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**

The excavation for a working access to the site from The Close was monitored. The site was stripped of material down to the formation level. The rear of the property was left untouched. The area marked 'un-observed' on Figure 2 was formerly covered by a concrete slab. Unfortunately the ground underneath was reduced while the archaeologist was not on site. The rest of the area to the north-west was monitored during ground reduction to natural geological deposits. This included both sides outside of the house footprint.

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**

The ground slopes down steeply from the northwest side of the house footprint to the road. This area had been partly disturbed during building work in The Close. It appeared that topsoil had been cleared to use the area for a compound with some builder's material subsequently dumped on the surface before landscaping with up to 500mm of topsoil. This topsoil was thickest adjacent to the road.

The natural geological deposit was yellow clayey silt becoming sandy with depth (03). For the area of the house footprint, and to the rear, this was covered by an old ploughsoil of brown-orange clayey silt (02) that was up to 100mm thick. The uppermost deposit was topsoil comprising brown-red silt (01) that was up to 400mm thick.

A pit was observed cut into the natural. This was seen after the area had been reduced and the level that it had been cut from is unknown. The oval pit 04 was 800mm NW/SE and 560mm NE/SW surviving 100-140mm deep; at least 100mm had been removed during the ground reduction. The NE side was vertical and deeper with the

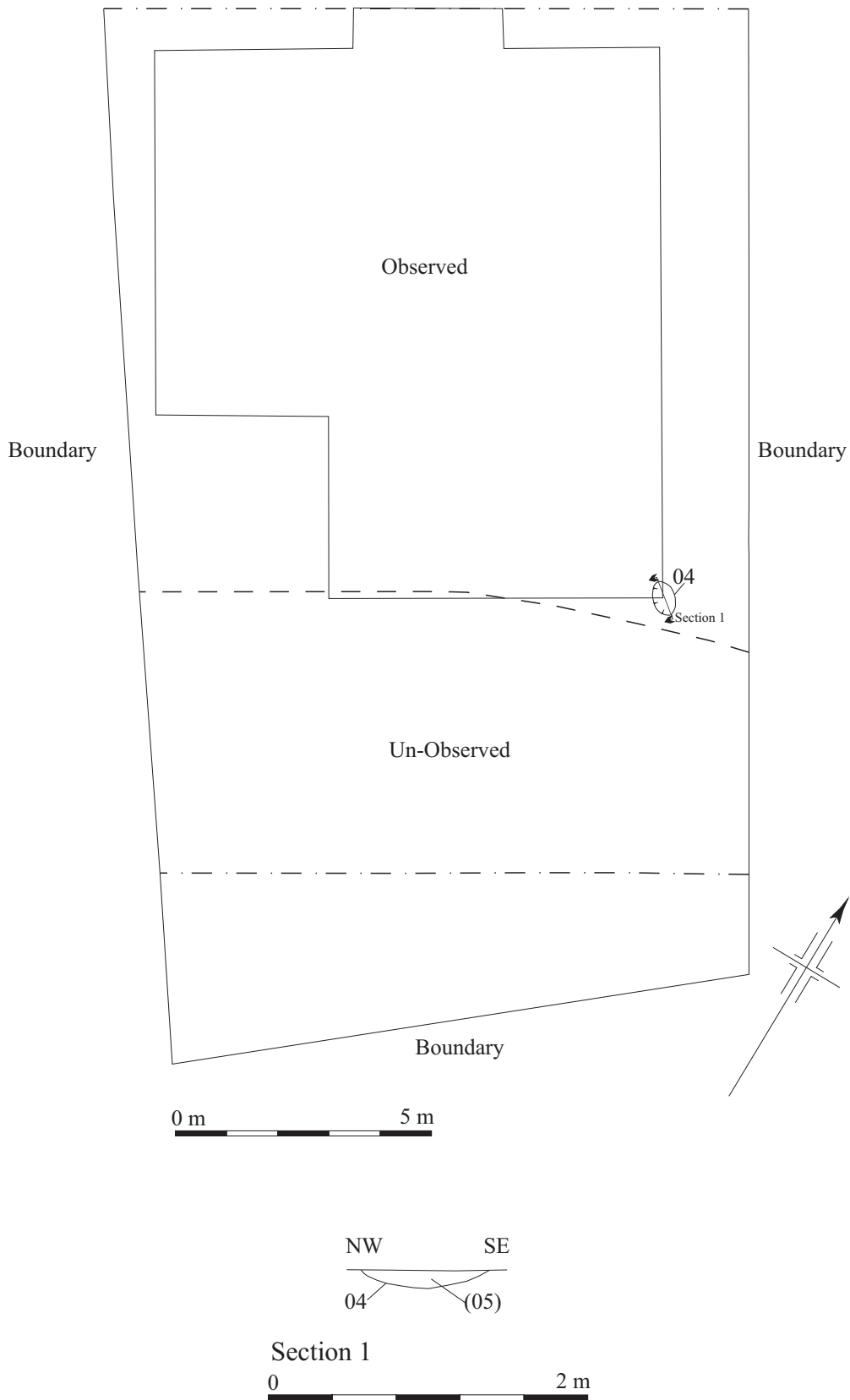


Figure 2. Plan and section

base sloping up to the SW. It is probable that the feature was dug using a spade from the NE side. The fill (05) comprised brown-orange silt, with 20% small pebbles in the eastern half.

## **5 FINDS**

Only modern material was seen.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

The pit was probably a planting pit for a shrub or similar. No finds earlier than the 20<sup>th</sup> century were present. It is unlikely that the area was occupied during the medieval period and was likely to have been in agricultural use.

## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

English Heritage, 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994 *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief*. Revised 2008