



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

THE TITHE BARN, MANOR FARM LANE,

CHESTERTON, OXFORDSHIRE

SP 5620 2140

On behalf of

Mr & Mrs Gavrilovic

MAY 2010

REPORT FOR

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Site Code

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Archive Location

The archive is currently held by JMHS and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Service with Accession No. 2009.67.

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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted an Archaeological Watching Brief on the 17th August 2009 as part of a planning application at The Tithe Barn, Manor Farm Lane, Chesterton. The Watching Brief was successful in locating an Anglo Saxon/Medieval pit and a contemporary ditch.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The proposed development site is located on the east side of Alchester Road immediately north of St Mary's Church (NGR SP 5620 2140). The underlying geology is Cornbrash Formation and Forest Marble Formation and the site is currently in use as a residential dwelling and garden. The site lies at c. 74m OD.

1.2 Planning Background

Cherwell District Council has granted planning permission under planning application number 07/02015/F for a two-storey extension to the existing property. Due to the potential of the site to contain archaeological remains a condition was attached requiring that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during the period of groundwork's. This is in line with PPG 16 that was in place at the time of the groundwork and Local Plan Policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site is located in an area of archaeological potential in the core of the medieval settlement and 40m north-east of the late 12th century church of St Mary. North of the church and 60m west of the site is the location of earthworks in the centre of Chesterton originally thought to be a Roman fort but now known to be the remains of a 13th century building. Medieval pottery indicates that occupation stopped in the 14th century (HER D1591; NGR SP 5615 2140). Further medieval features in the form of ditches and a pit, all dated from the 12th -13 century have been recorded 100m to the south of the proposed site (HER D4986; SP 5619 2130).

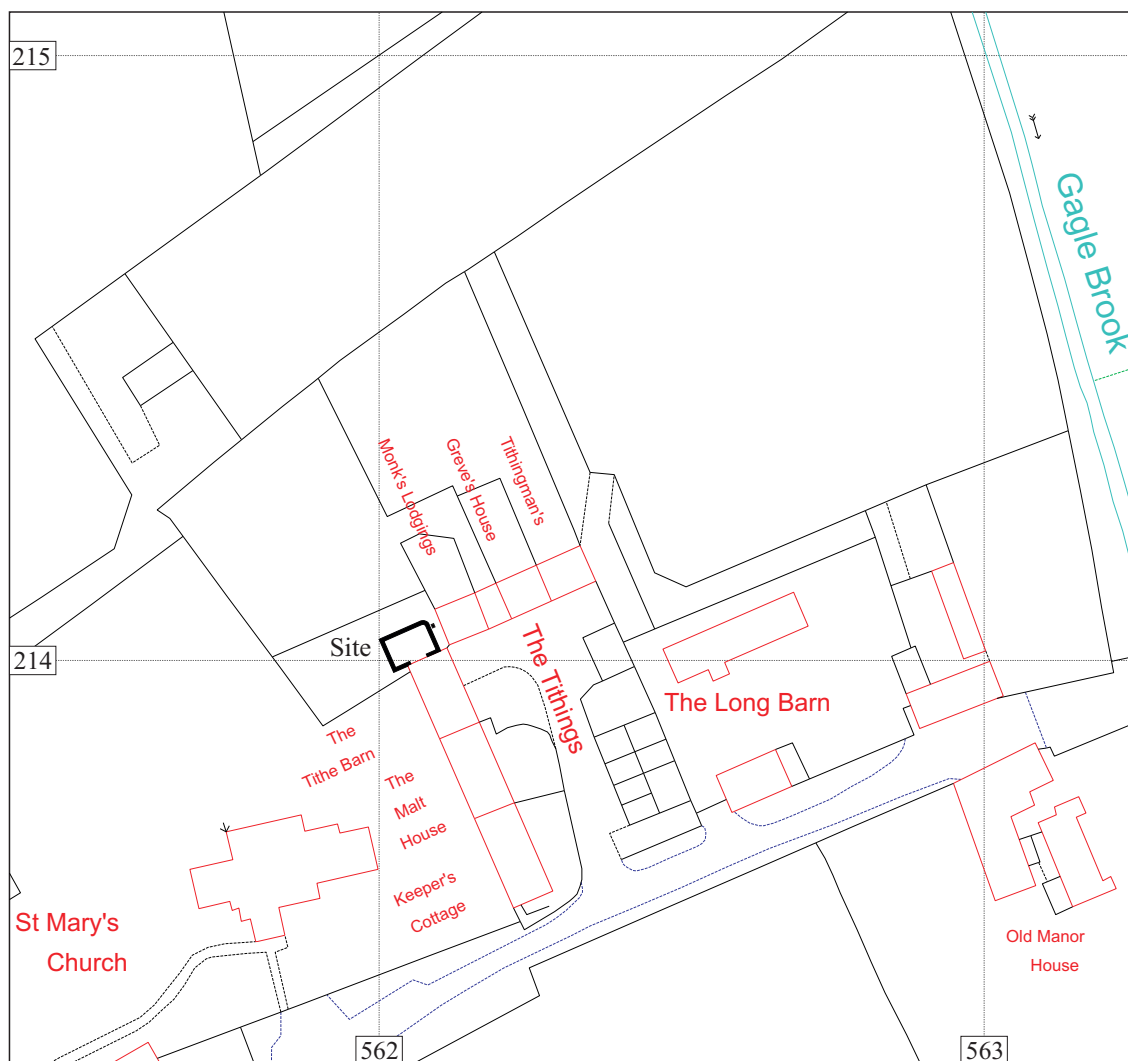
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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 archaeological remains.

In particular:

- To record any evidence relating to the medieval and post-medieval settlement.



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0 m 50 m

Figure 1. Site location

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 approved by Mr Hugh Coddington, Deputy County Archaeological Officer to Oxfordshire County 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

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of ground works associated with the development. This included surface stripping for the new build and excavation for new foundations and services. 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 for Archaeologists (1994).

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in () indicate feature fills or deposits of material. Those without brackets refer to features themselves.

4.1 Results (Figure 2)

The natural geology encountered on site was a light orange/yellow sandy cornbrash (03). From observations made of the trench sections, two features were revealed cutting into this horizon. Towards the NE, pit 04 was noted with a moderately steep and slightly irregular northern edge and a near vertical southern edge measuring 1.90m in width as seen and at least 0.48m in depth, continuing below the depth of the trench. It contained a single fill composed of mid grey-brown clayey loam with occasional small fragments of limestone, occasional pieces of decayed ceramic building material (CBM) and occasional flecks of charcoal (06). Three sherds of pottery were recovered from this fill.

Slightly further south, but next to pit 04, was a ditch 05. This ditch had moderately steep, curving sides and a relatively flat base measuring 1.20m wide as seen and 0.42m deep. It was filled with a mid grey-brown clayey loam containing occasional small fragments of cornbrash (07). This ditch was aligned approximately ENE-WSW

and is thought to continue across the site. Within part of the foundation trench furthest west, the feature was recorded in section as ditch 08, with a slightly less complete profile but with a fill (09) composed of mid grey-brown silty loam identical to fill (07). Two sherds of pottery were recovered from this fill.

Overlying these features for the majority of the site was a mid grey-brown clayey loam with moderate to frequent cornbrash inclusions (02), which varied in depth from 0.14m towards the west to 0.5m towards the east. However, overlying ditch 08 in the east facing section was a mid brown-grey silty loam (10) 0.40m thick, thought to represent a former garden border. The relationship between (10) and (02) was destroyed by a modern planting pit.

Overlying deposit (02) was dark brown-grey silty loam modern topsoil (01). It was 0.20m thick with further evidence of disturbance and a modern path observed above pit 04 and ditch 05 (Figure 2, section 1.1).

During the Watching Brief, the level of the site for the extension was also reduced in height. Although monitored, this was not dug deep enough to reveal any further features.

JMHS was not informed about the excavation of the associated service trench therefore this was not monitored.

4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The reliability is considered good. The Watching Brief took place during periods of sunshine and cloud.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 6 sherds with a total weight of 26g. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

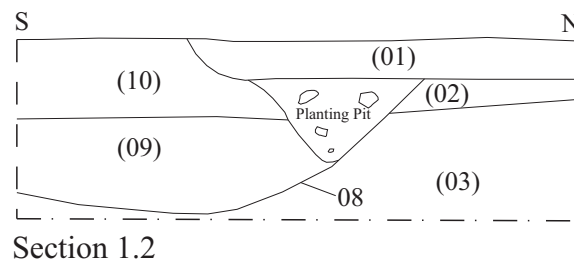
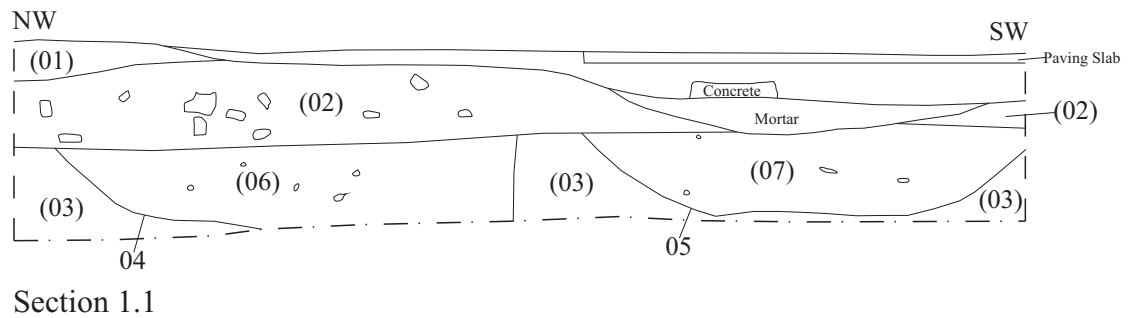
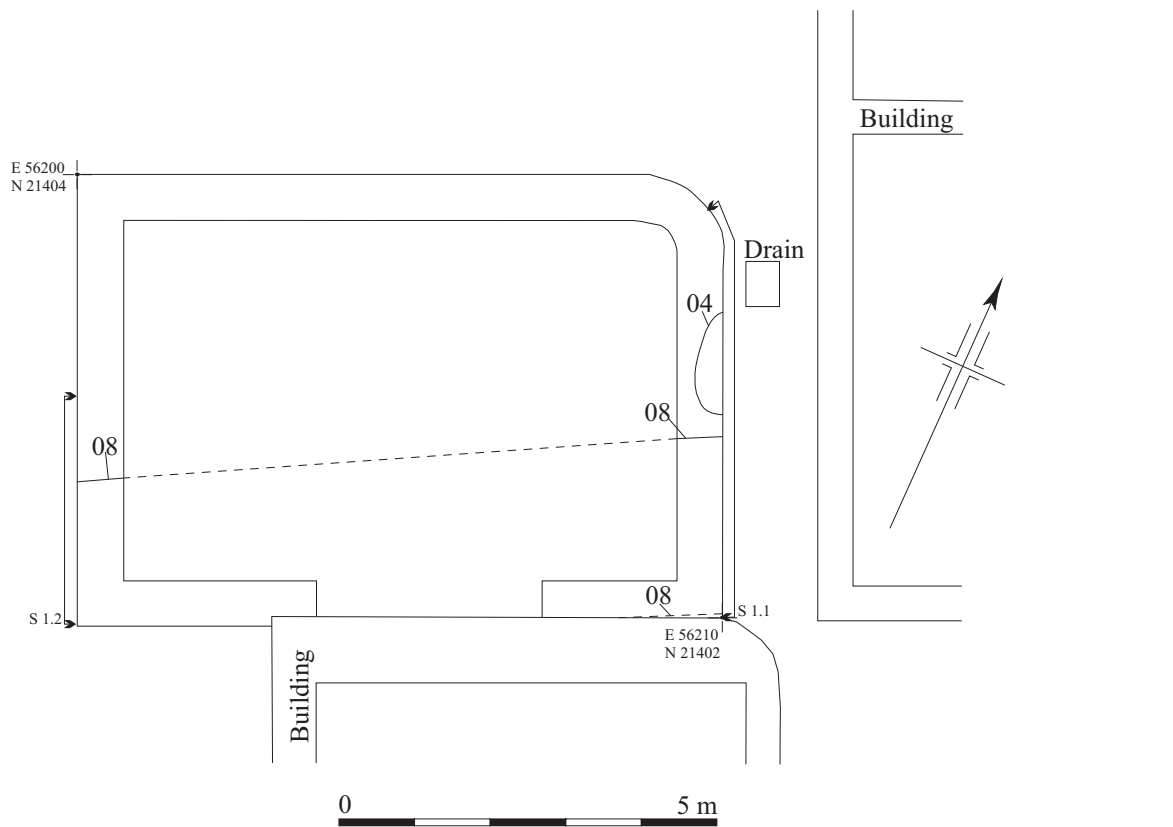
OXAC: **Cotswold-type ware**, AD975-1350. 3 sherds, 13g.

OXBK: **Medieval Shelly Coarseware**, AD1100-1350. 1 sherd, 4g.

In addition, the following, not covered by the Oxfordshire type-series, was also noted:

E/MS: **Early/middle Saxon hand-built wares**, c AD450 – 850. Moderate to dense sub-rounded quartz up to 0.5mm, sparse angular calcareous material up to 2mm, rare rounded red ironstone and angular red flint up to 1mm. 2 sherds, 9g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of pottery types is fairly typical of sites in the Bicester area, comprising shelly wares



0 2 m

Figure 2. Plan and sections

from the north, and Oolitic wares from the south-west. The Saxon hand-built pottery is also fairly typical, and can be paralleled with the material from Chapel Street in Bicester (Mephams 2003). It is possible that it dates to the 9th century; certainly, Mellor (1994, 36-7) noted that such pottery is often found with stratified with late Saxon wares such as OXAC, and the latter is known from late 9th century contexts in places such as Fairford (ibid. 51), although is more typically of 11th –century date in the northern areas of the county.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

	E/MS		OXAC		OXBK		
Cntxt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
U/S					1	4	U/S
6	2	9	1	2			L9thC?
9			2	11			11thC
Total	2	9	3	13	1	4	

5.2 Animal Bone

One small fragment of animal bone was recovered from fill of pit 04.

5.3 Tile

One small fragment of floor tile was recovered from the fill of pit 04

6 CONCLUSION

The Watching Brief was successful in locating a Late Anglo Saxon/ Early Medieval pit 04 and ditch 05/08. Pit 04 contained fragments of pot, bone and floor tile suggesting that it may have been used as a rubbish pit. The steep southeast side of pit 04 may suggest that it was dug after ditch 05/08, but while it was still a significant feature.

These features appear contemporary with medieval remains found 40m north-east of St Mary's church, the 13th century building lies 60m west of the site. Ditch 05/08 could represent a boundary ditch delineating the edge of the settlements.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site record

Physical record

The finds

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the County Museums' Store.

8 Bibliography

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Mephram, L, 2003 The pottery in P A Harding and P Andrews, Anglo-Saxon and medieval settlement at Chapel Street, Bicester: excavations 1999–2000. *Oxoniensia*, **67**, 141–179