

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**GUEST HOUSE, MANOR HOUSE,**

**SUTTON COURTENAY, OXFORDSHIRE**

**SU 5025 9416**

*On behalf of*

*Mr A Warne*

**November 2010**

**REPORT FOR** Mr A Warne  
Manor House  
Church Street  
Sutton Courtenay  
Oxon OX14

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## **Summary**

*A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation of footings for an extension to the side of the property. One late 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century rubbish pit or ditch was observed.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The development site is located some 15m north east of the Manor House off Church Street in Sutton Courtenay (NGR SU 5025 9416). The underlying geology is First Terrace Gravel Deposits over Gault Clay and the site lies at approximately 50m OD.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

A condition attached to planning permission granted by the Vale of White Horse District Council to convert an existing building adjacent to the Manor to create a quest house annexe required an archaeological watching brief during the course of the groundworks. This involved the demolition of some existing outbuildings and the creation of a single storey extension to it (SUT/570/25 & SUT/570/26-LB. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a *Brief* for such archaeological work. This was in line with PPS 5 and Local Plan policies.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The building is a Grade II Listed Building (LB 251424) and is also located within the bounds of Sutton Courtenay Manor which is included as Grade II in the Register of Parks & Gardens (PG 2109). The building subject to planning permission is thought to be a 16<sup>th</sup> century banqueting hall. It is adjacent to the manor house that is 16<sup>th</sup> century but there is evidence that elements of it date to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. There is evidence that there has been a manor house on or near to this site since at least the early medieval period. The site was owned by the Broun family until *c.* 1500. It was possible that earlier features of the manor house complex may be revealed during the groundworks involved with the outbuilding extension.

## **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 associated with the earlier phases of the manor house complex.

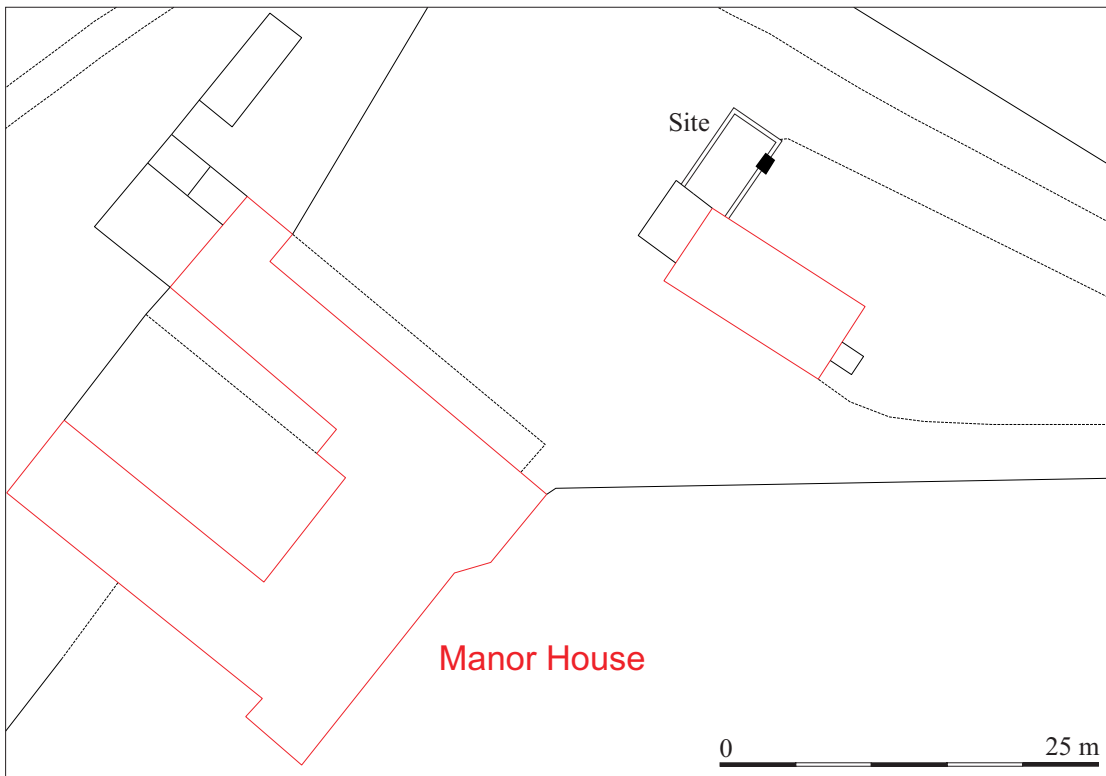
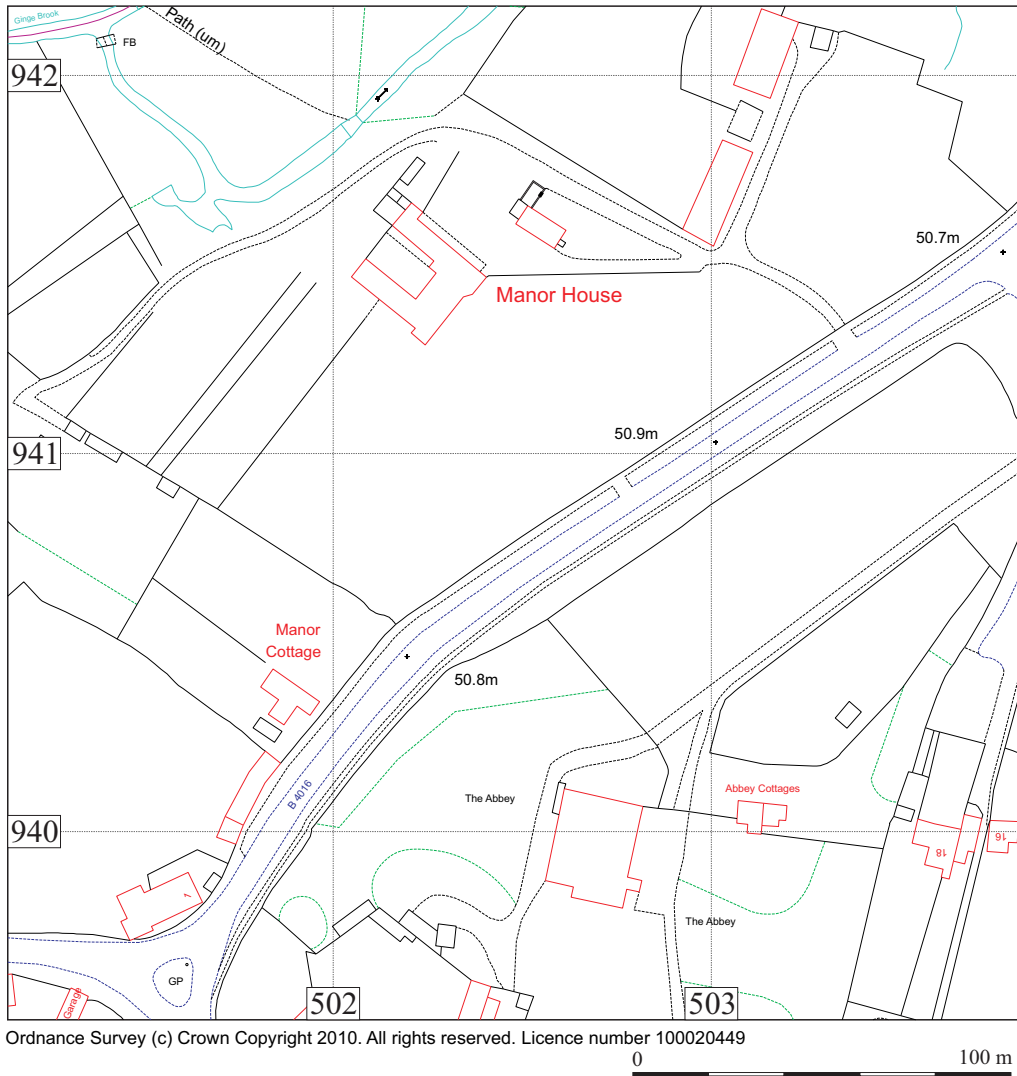


Figure 1. Site location

### **3 STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (OCAS) issued a brief for the work, which John Moore Heritage Services carried out to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with OCAS, on behalf of the local planning authority.

#### **3.2 Methodology**

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of ground works associated with the development that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains. This included the excavation of footings. 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 (Figure 2)**

All features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material whilst the other numbers reflect structures or features cut into layers.

#### **4.1 Field Results**

Cut into the natural grey white gravel (02) was ditch/pit 06, which was 0.80m wide, 0.60m long and 0.62m deep as seen. It had concave edges, which sloped at an 80-degree angle. It was aligned southwest-northeast. It was filled with a moderately compact dark grey-black silty clay (05), which contained around 15% small gravel no larger than 0.04m and circa 30% charcoal flecking. It contained pottery, animal bone and shell, although the shell was not retained. Only a small part of the feature could be seen, and it was not possible to determine whether it was a pit or part of a ditch. It was also not fully excavated as the base continued below the level of the foundation trench.

Also visible was the cut for the 20<sup>th</sup> century extension wall foundation 04. It was 0.60m wide as seen. The fill of 04 was the wall for the building 03, consisting of red brick and limestone fragments no larger than 0.12m x 0.08m.

Abutted against this was deposit (01), a mixture of topsoil & rubble from the demolition of the extension. It was a mid red brown in colour, containing red brick fragments (15-20%) and small stone (<0.06m, 10%).

#### **4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results**

The watching brief was carried out in good conditions with excellent co-operation from the contractors carrying out the groundworks.

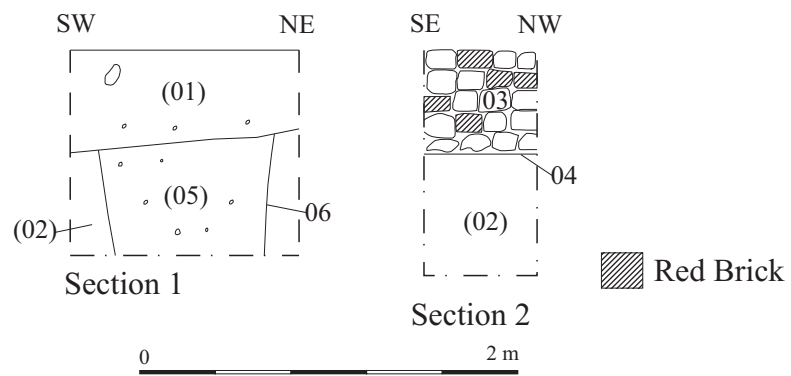
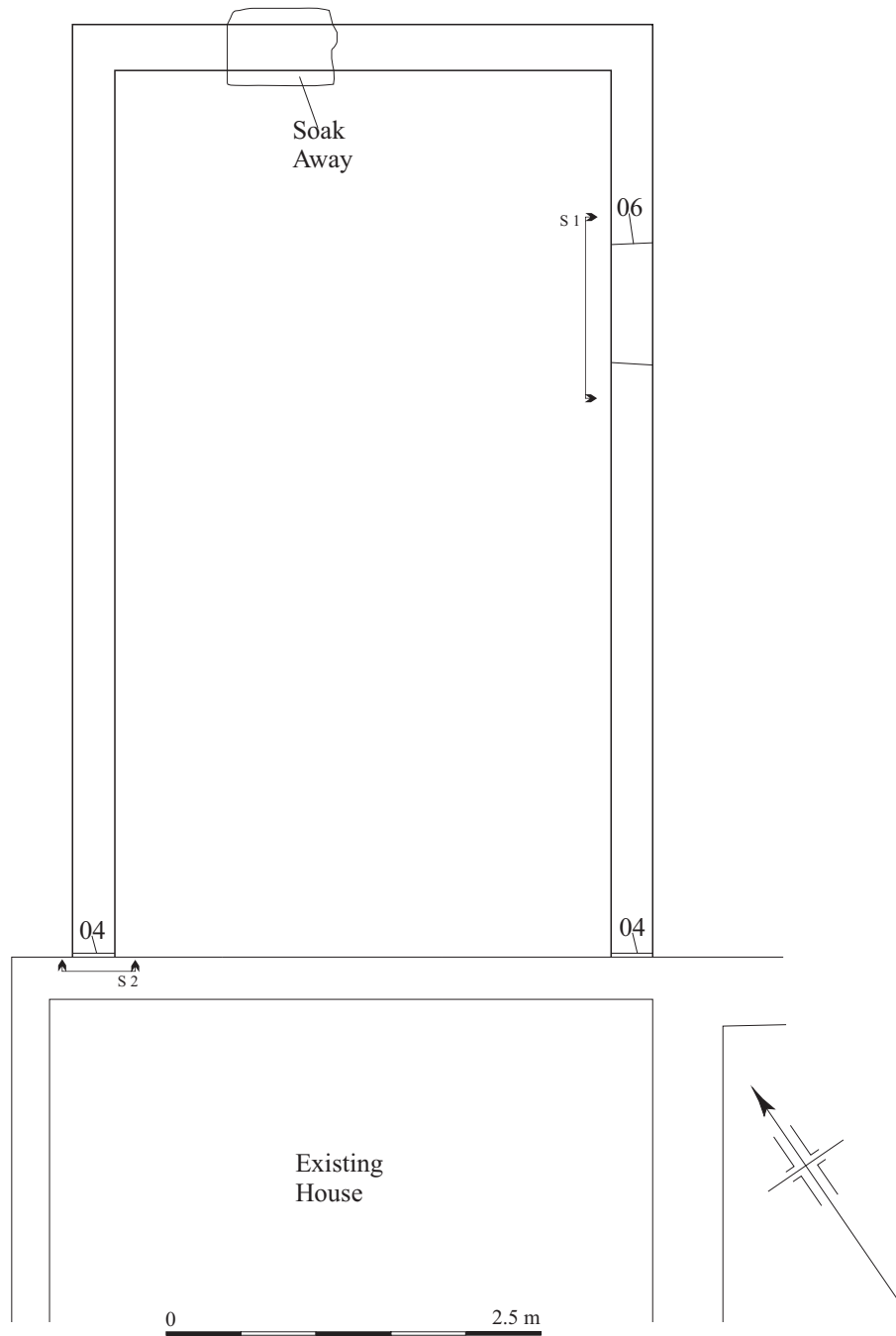


Figure 2. Plan and sections

## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 16 sherds with a total weight of 326g. It all occurred in a single context, (05), and consisted entirely of early medieval unglazed wares which are typical finds at sites of the period in the region. Given the lack of common 13<sup>th</sup> wares, the group almost certainly dates to the late 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The material was 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. 6 sherds, 107g.  
OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075 – 1350. 10 sherds, 219g.

The group largely comprised of bodysherds, probably from jars, many of which showed signs of extensive sooting and lime-scale, and it appears to be a typical domestic assemblage. A rim from a bowl in OXBF was present, as was a sherd with a thumbled applied strip, probably from a storage vessel. The OXY assemblage included two sagging base-sherds, both from different vessels.

### 5.2 Animal Bone

The assemblage consisted of 52 fragments of bone. 21 fragments of bone were too small to be identifiable. The main assemblage centres on pig, cow, small bird and fish. The condition of the bone was considered to be good.

The pig is represented by four ribs, a fragment of the mandible, two tusks, a fragment of scapula, and a tooth.

The cow is represented by two fragmented pieces of scapula bearing butchery marks. There is also a fragment of metacarpal and a fragment of the lower mandible.

Bird is represented by 12 bones relating to the wings and legs. It is not known what bird they are from, but the fact that they were from a rubbish pit may indicate that they were from a game bird.

The three fish bones were almost certainly from a pike. These bones included one fragment of lower mandible, one vertebrae and one pin bone.

The assemblage was recovered from fill (05) of a pit/ditch 06, which had been used as a domestic dump in the early medieval period.

### 5.3 Environmental Remains

No features were considered to warrant environmental sampling.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The watching brief revealed pit/ditch 06, which contained a high degree of animal bone, pottery and shell. This feature most likely represents a domestic rubbish dump





Plate 1. South-west facing working shot of the Guest House



Plate 2. West Facing Pit/ditch 06.

from the 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century phase of the medieval manor house, and not the later 16<sup>th</sup> century Cottage.

## 7 ARCHIVE

### Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

#### Paper Record

|                                    |                          |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| The project brief                  | The project report       |
| Written Scheme of Investigation    | The primary site records |
| The photographic and drawn records |                          |

#### Physical record

Finds

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the County Museums' Store under accession number 2010.88

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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