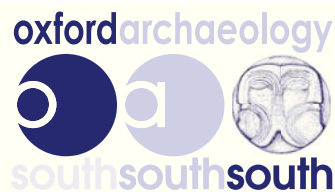


Church Farm Lewknor Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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Church Farm, Lewknor, Oxfordshire

Archaeological watching brief

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Church Farm, Lewknor, Oxfordshire

Summary

Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Regeneration Holdings Limited to undertake a programme of archaeological watching brief at Church Farm, Lewknor, South Oxfordshire as part of a residential development of the site. The investigation was undertaken during works to open service trenches and foundation trenches for new houses and it followed a recent programme of building recording at the site. This building recording principally concentrated on a nationally significant Grade I listed barn believed to have been constructed in the second quarter of the 14th century and recognised as one of Oxfordshire's most important medieval buildings. The significance of the building largely lies in the fact that it was originally constructed as a medieval hall house and was later abandoned and converted to a barn.

John Fletcher, who has studied the building has said that it must have been 'one of England's most impressive halls' (Oxoniensia XL, 1975) and MCJ Morrey and JT Smith have said that its original open truss would have been hardly paralleled for size in English timber-framed buildings.' (Morrey and Smith, 1973).

A report on the building recording has previously been produced and its findings have informed the watching brief.

Among the principal objectives of the watching brief was to look for any evidence which might suggest that the hall house was once part of a larger building or a more extensive complex of buildings. The west end of the building has been entirely reconstructed in the post-medieval period and there is uncertainty over the original footprint of this end of the structure. The building may originally have extended further to the west, or adjoined another building which no longer survives and there is suggestion that the construction may have been interrupted or curtailed by the Black Death. Therefore it may be that the building was planned to form part of a larger structure to the west but that this was never completed.

The watching brief found no evidence to suggest that the barn may originally have extended further to the north or that it originally adjoined a further range at this location. The archaeological monitoring identified a number of minor post-medieval features including the base of a later 19th-century WC block which probably relates to a building first shown on the 1881 OS map, two stubs from probably later 18th/19th-century walls and three posts probably from post-medieval buildings. These posts extended below the level of ground reduction so were not fully investigated but one was removed and it was found to be sitting directly on a brick which may be of 16th or 17th century date but was probably reused.

Very few archaeological features were revealed in the excavations in the western part of the site although a possible lynchet or terrace was identified in the foundation trenches of the garage for House 3.



Church Farm, Lewknor, Oxfordshire

Archaeological watching brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Regeneration Holdings Limited to undertake a programme of historic building recording and archaeological watching brief at Church Farm, Lewknor, Oxfordshire (Fig 1). Regeneration Holdings Limited were granted planning permission by South Oxfordshire District Council for a development at the site including the conversion of several buildings, the demolition of others and the construction of new dwellings, with the condition that programmes of building recording and below-ground archaeological watching brief be undertaken (Planning reference: P08/E0805). This is in line with PPG 16 and Policy BE 17 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 1977.
- 1.1.2 The main focus of the building recording was the Grade I listed barn which is believed to have been constructed in the first half of the 14th century. The report on this part of the project was completed and issued in October 2009. The current document only covers the below-ground archaeological watching brief.
- 1.1.3 In February 2009 a design brief was issued by Richard Oram (County Archaeological Services) to cover the below-ground archaeological watching brief.
- 1.1.4 The design brief detailed that the site had an archaeological potential due to the 14th-century hall house (now barn) on the site but also due to the fact that it is c.70m north-west of the late 12th-century St Margaret's Church. The potential is also enhanced by routine air survey work undertaken by the M40 Research Group, along the proposed line of the motorway, which recorded earthworks a short distance to the north and north-west of the current development site. The earthworks are likely to be the remains from a medieval village including a street, ridge and furrow, boundary bank, village green and house platforms.

1.2 Aims and objectives

- 1.2.1 The two main general aims of the project were:
- To preserve by record any archaeological remains (if present) that the development may remove or damage within the impacted area.
 - To signal, before the destruction of the material in question, the discovery of a significant archaeological find, for which the resources allocated are not sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.
- 1.2.2 More specific objectives were:
- To monitor works adjacent to the west end of the barn to look specifically for possible evidence which may suggest that the hall formerly extended beyond the current footprint or adjoined a further range in this area.
 - To identify any evidence which may relate to the possible former medieval



settlement in this vicinity.

1.3 Methodology

- 1.3.1 The archaeological watching brief was maintained during intrusive ground works related to the new development including the excavation of trenches for foundations and service trenches.
- 1.3.2 The main site work was undertaken in July 2009, April, May, June, September and October 2010.

1.4 Current development

- 1.4.1 The current development includes the conversion of the Grade I listed barn to B1 workshop, the conversion of a stables building to B1 office, the reconstruction of a granary, the demolition of several modern redundant farm buildings and the erection of 4 residential dwellings under the application number P08/E0805.

2 HISTORICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Lewknor

- 2.1.1 There is known to have been a significant level of occupation and activity in the general vicinity of Lewknor for many centuries and there are two ancient roads which pass through the parish which are known to have been in use since at least the Iron Age.
- 2.1.2 These are the Ridgeway along the top of the Chiltern Hills escarpment and the Icknield Way at the foot of it. The Icknield Way follows closely to the 500 m contour line and is believed to have been formed an alternative route to the Ridgeway, particularly for use in summer. This route passes about half a mile above the village of Lewknor and the current development site which are located in the area of the most productive soils where the chalk geology is covered by a rich loam.
- 2.1.3 The first documentary reference to Lewknor occurs in or about 990 and The Church appears to have been first constructed in the second half of the 12th century (VCH). In 1146 Abbingdon Abbey was confirmed in the possession of Lewknor, without mention of a church, but the late Norman architectural features in the church suggests that the building must have been constructed soon after this date (VCH).
- 2.1.4 The ancient parish of Lewknor was very large, c.10 miles long but the current parish comprises a narrow strip which runs up into the Chilterns.
- 2.1.5 The most extensive archaeological investigations undertaken in the general vicinity has related to the construction of the M40 motorway in the early 1970s which passes a short distance to the east of the village. These investigations revealed traces of a Romano-British settlement near the village and a Romano-British cemetery near the Icknield Way.

2.2 Previous historical research on current development site

- 2.2.1 The main research on the site has focused on the possible origins and early history of the medieval, Grade I listed barn which is believed to have been constructed in the first half of the 14th century as a house but was converted at an early date to a barn. This research is clearly of relevance to the current study due to the building forming part of the current site and the possibility that it formed part of a larger complex of buildings.



- 2.2.2 The considerable significance of the barn at Lewknor has not always been recognised and it was only in 1969 that an indication of the building's interest was raised by Dr Peter Salway of All Souls College, Oxford, who noticed medieval timber framing with ornamental cusping hidden by modern cladding.
- 2.2.3 In the following years the building was subject to considerable study and investigations and these were reported in three separate articles contained in *Oxoniensia*¹:
- Hilary Turner, 'The Great Barn', Lewknor: The Documentary Evidence, *Oxoniensia* xxxvii (1972), 187-91.
 - MCJ Morrey and JT Smith, 'The Great Barn' Lewknor: The Architectural Evidence, *Oxoniensia* xxxviii (1973), 339-45.
 - *The Medieval Hall at Lewknor* by John Fletcher *Oxoniensia* xl (1975), 247-53.
- 2.2.4 The 1972 article concentrated on the historical and documentary evidence while the 1973 article concentrated on the architectural evidence and summarised a programme of recording undertaken by the RCHME. The 1975 article attempted to answer remaining questions from a regional and economic perspective but concluded that the building still merited further study. The barn was formally listed Grade I in 1976.
- 2.2.5 In c.1989 a programme of dendrochronology was undertaken on the barn by Dan Miles for the Ancient Monuments Laboratory of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England. Four samples were taken and three of these provided felling dates of 1339, 1342/3 and 1350/1.

2.3 Documentary evidence

- 2.3.1 Research undertaken by Hilary Turner in the archives of All Souls College, Oxford (until recently the owners of the current site) has shown that Church Farm was acquired by All Souls College in 1440 together with other land (the advowson, the glebe land and the rectorial tithes) probably associated with Abingdon Abbey. Several particulars of accounts from the 1450s-1480s confirm the farm as then being within the College's ownership and evidence suggests that the acquisition had included an existing set of farm buildings at the site. These buildings must have formed part of the rectorial estate and among the structures was a barn and a 'Great Barn'. Documents of the same period show that a new Parsonage was added to this complex in or around 1440 and it may be that it was constructed to replace the previous house on the site (the building in the current study) which was converted to a barn. Turner's article considers that the barn was therefore probably constructed by Abingdon Abbey which would have had both the money and the skilled craftsmen to erect a building such as that in the current study.
- 2.3.2 John Fletcher's article cast doubt on this interpretation, and suggested that it was 'particularly unlikely' that the Abbey would have constructed the hall. Due to the cusps and other detailing it is apparent that the building was designed to impress relative to other comparable buildings in the region and based on various stylistic evidence Fletcher considered the building to probably date from c.1325-1350. Comparisons were particularly drawn with other known hall houses constructed in this region in the 14th century including Sutton Courtenay Rectory House (c.1320), South Moreton (c.1330), Harwell (c.1360), Sutton Courtenay Manor House (c.1390), and Marlow Rectory. If the building was built in this period then Fletcher felt that John de Lewknor (c.1316-1360) was the most likely person to have been responsible for its construction. John de Lewknor was of the family who had been hereditary lay rectors of Lewknor, and who

1 *Oxoniensia*: annual journal of the Oxfordshire Architectural; and Historical Society.



may have kept the Rectory Farm after Abingdon had started appointing the rectors. He was a county gentleman, Knight of the Shire (M.P. For Oxfordshire) between 1331 and 1354. He was also responsible for rebuilding the east end of the church between 1320 and 1340 (Amery, 2006). Houses of this quality, typical of the last generation before the Black Death, were in general built by people of this status in county society.

- 2.3.3 The relatively slight smoke blackening on the roof suggests a small number of fires in the hall and Fletcher postulated that it might be that the construction of the hall was interrupted (or not fully completed) due to the Black Death (1348-9). Fletcher's proposed date for the building was subsequently supported by the results of the dendrochronology survey (referred to above). The dendrochronology may also support the theory that the barn's construction or occupation was affected by the Black Death but it cannot confirm this.
- 2.3.4 The current project has not included a comprehensive programme of documentary research but a report by Dr James Moir of Finial Associates in 2002 includes two useful pieces of evidence: an extract from the 1851 Enclosure Map and a View of Lewknor from 1764. The 1764 view is from the north and clearly shows the church to the left and the house to the right. Towards the centre of the view, between the church and the house is a broadly east to west aligned single storey range with thatched roof and post construction. This was presumably an agricultural building, possibly open fronted and forming part of the farmyard immediately to the south of it. It is interesting to note that this view does not show the medieval barn which should have been visible just behind the single storey range. It is likely that this omission was merely due to artistic licence although it does raise the interesting possibility discussed by Dr Moir that in fact the barn was originally constructed elsewhere and that it was dismantled and re-erected at Lewknor, possibly as late as the 18th century. Although Dr Moir does not state firmly that this is his belief he does show that this possibility cannot be discounted and that there are a number of pieces of evidence which tentatively suggest that this could be the case. Further documentary research may ultimately prove or disprove this theory but the current study assumes that although the building has been much altered it has not been moved to Lewknor from elsewhere.
- 2.3.5 The 1815 Enclosure Map shows a building on broadly the same footprint as the barn although it appears to be smaller than the current building and it is difficult to compare with absolute precision the layout of the buildings in Church Farm at this date with those existing today. It is clear from the Enclosure Map that in 1815 the farmyard included a long range of buildings which extended south-east from the farmhouse towards the granary (this area is largely outside the current development site. The east to west stable range is not shown on the map although there is a boundary indicated along this alignment connecting with the north-west corner of the barn. There appears to have been an east to west track immediately north of the barn (similar to today) and the stables were almost certainly constructed immediately north of this soon after 1815. The map shows a north to south building detached from the barn but immediately to the north of it, broadly on the footprint of the eastern part of House 4 being constructed in the current development. There is no building shown on the western part of House 4 although there is a boundary indicated in this location which appears to have separated the farmyard to the south from the field to the north. Both areas are shown to have been owned by All Souls College, Oxford. The map does not appear to show any buildings in the location of Houses 1, 2 or 3 which are being constructed in the current development.
- 2.3.6 The 1881 25 inch Ordnance Survey map (not reproduced here) shows that by this date the long range which extended towards the granary from the south side of the house had been



lost and the eastern part of the stable range had been constructed. A large new east to west building had by this date been constructed to the east of the house and a smaller building is shown immediately north of the medieval barn (although detached from it).

- 2.3.7 The existing Grade II listed farmhouse was partly rebuilt in the later 18th century but the list description suggests that it may have a later 16th-century core. The house did not form part of the building recording undertaken by OA at Church Farm.

2.4 Geology and Topography

- 2.4.1 The development site is located on immediately west of the Church on the northern side of the village (SU 7150 9765). The site is currently in use as a farmyard. The site lies at approximately 115m OD and the geology is shown as Chalk.

3 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 Site location

- 3.1.1 Lewknor is located c.20 km south-east of Oxford and Church Farm is c.40 m north-west from the village church and c.400 m to the north-west of Junction 6 of the M40 Motorway.

3.2 Outline site description prior to current development

- 3.2.1 Prior to the start of the works in the current development the relatively historic buildings on the Church Farm site comprised the farmhouse towards the north-western corner (not included in current development) a stable range to the south-east of this (orientated SW to NE), adjoining granary at the south-west end and the main barn (Grade I listed) at the north-east end. Between these buildings there were a number of large modern farmyard sheds and the complex has remained in agricultural use until recent years.
- 3.2.2 *The barn* is 15.25 m long by 9.75 m (32 ft) wide and it has a raised aisle type roof with clasped purlins. It is believed to have originally been constructed in the second quarter of the 14th century as a richly decorated end hall house where the eastern two bays would have formed the hall itself and within this area there would have been an open hearth with smoke allowed to escape through the roof. The hall would have been c.10.3 m (34 ft) long and it would have had a clear span of 8.8 m (29 ft). Such a span would have been remarkable for a building of this date although its form has been modified by the addition of two 20th-century supporting posts. The smoke blackening on the rafters and other timbers (albeit relatively light) appears to confirm that there was an open fire in the hall but for how long the house was occupied is uncertain. The trusses, frames, walls and roof in the area of the hall would have been richly decorated, particularly with cusping which partially survives, and in these areas the structure is clearly designed for display. The hall would have been illuminated by pairs of projecting bay windows, c.2.6 m wide, in both north and south walls (evidence of these revealed in the recent recording project) and the main entrance into this hall would have been through the central arch of a spere truss (in-situ) via a screens passage. The screens passage was immediately west of the spere truss and beyond this there would presumably have been a service range but this end of the building has been entirely reconstructed, possibly in the 18th or 19th century, so that its primary form is unknown.
- 3.2.3 The west end wall has been entirely reconstructed (together with the western ends of the north and south walls) and we know very little about the original form of this end of the building. The primary structure may have had a similar footprint to that existing today or



it may have extended further west. Alternatively it may have ended further east, a short distance west from Frame 3 if the construction of the building was unexpectedly curtailed at this point (possibly for example by the Black Death) or it may have adjoined a separate (or proposed) building at this point.

- 3.2.4 Investigating any possible evidence of a former longer barn, or a further range which adjoined the north side of the barn, was a principal objective of the current project.
- 3.2.5 The stables, which was converted in 2009-10 in the current work, adjoins the south-western side of the barn and extend c.24 m along one side of a yard. This range is not shown on the 1815 Enclosure map (reproduced in the Finial Associates 2002 report) and the structure all appears of later 19th and 20th century date.
- 3.2.6 **The granary** is a rectangular plan, single-storey building (7 x 4.5m) with a slate-covered gabled roof and walls clad in weatherboarding. In recent years the condition of this building has deteriorated seriously and it has been substantially rebuilt in the current project reusing materials from the existing building. The timber members all appear to be softwood and none of the visible fabric appears older than the 19th/20th century.
- 3.2.7 The modern farm buildings which are being demolished in the current works include a large single phase concrete frame barn which wraps around the southern and eastern sides of the main barn constructed with pre-cast concrete members. The corrugated panel roof is supported by concrete posts with jowled heads on which principal rafters sit.

4 RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 Layout of current development

- 4.1.1 The current development comprises the construction of four new dwellings in the areas adjacent to the barn, farmhouse and other historic buildings referred to above. Houses 1, 2 and 3 are each on the south-west side of the main entrance track into the farmyard and they have been constructed on a previously open, grassed area. House 4 is larger and is located to the north of the barn and to the east of the farmhouse. This has been constructed on the site of a modern, recently demolished agricultural shed.

4.2 House 1 and 2

- 4.2.1 Houses 1 and 2 form a single building located towards the southern end of the complex. They are located on the western side of the main access into the Church Farm site. This access route appears to have been a 20th century diversion from the previous route immediately to the east. No buildings are shown in this area on any of the historic maps consulted. This area was grassed prior to the start of the current work.
- 4.2.2 Trenches excavated in May 2010 for this building were monitored and no archaeological features remains were encountered. The deposits consisted of garden soil overlying the natural chalk geology.

4.3 House 3

- 4.3.1 House 3 is located c.13 m to the west from the granary and although it is detached from Plots 1 and 2 to the south-east it is located very close to them. No buildings are shown in this location on any of the historic maps consulted in the current development.
- 4.3.2 **Foundations for house:** A number of foundation trenches were opened over the footprint of the new House 3. The trenches formed a rectangle with three main parallel trenches, each one c.15 m long and orientated broadly north-west to south-east. The ends



of each of these was connected by two shorter trenches, each one c.8 m long and orientated south-west to north-east. Each trench was c.0.5 m wide.

- 4.3.3 No archaeological features were encountered in any of these trenches. The topsoil was disturbed in places and there was evidence of rooting. There was ceramic building material inclusions forming c.1%. The trenches were c.0.7 – 1 m deep and the soil was loose silty and grey-brown in colour.
- 4.3.4 **Foundations for garage:** Foundations for a new garage were excavated a short distance to the west of House 3. The foundations were c.8 m long (NW-SE) by c.6 m wide (SW-NE) and they were c.1.2 m deep. A NW-SE storm-water drain extended through the centre of the garage passing through the two shorter trenches.
- 4.3.5 The western trench showed evidence of a possible lynchet (a bank of earth that builds up on the downslope of a field ploughed over a long period of time) with a broadly north-south alignment. This possible feature passed through the western trench towards its southern corner and a section is included in this report as an inset to Figure 5. At this point the uppermost 60 cm comprised a predominantly mid grey clay silt and lenses of re-deposited chalk [4]. This may have been a formerly buried soil/plough soil. Below this was a sloped fill [3] which may have related to a possible terrace cut or lynchet [2] which is apparent in the trench. Only the southern edge of this feature was seen so the interpretation of a lynchet is tentative.

4.4 House 4

- 4.4.1 House 4 is located in the northern part of the site, c.7 m to the east of the farmhouse (at the nearest point) and c.7 m to the north of the main barn (again at the nearest point). The new house has an L-shaped plan with an north-east to south range (c.31 m long x c.6 m wide) and a shorter range at the east end which aligns with the main barn and is c.8 m wide by c.15 m long. The footprint of the long, narrow east to west range of House 4 sits almost exactly on the footprint of a possible later 19th-century agricultural range demolished in the current development. The footprint of the wider north to south range which aligns with the medieval barn is on what has until recently formed part of the modern concrete-covered farmyard.
- 4.4.2 As detailed above in the historical background there is a view of Lewknor dated 1764 which shows a thatch-roofed building in the vicinity of the west range of House 4. The 1815 Enclosure Map appears to confirm that by this date this building had been demolished but by the 1881 OS map it had been replaced by a further building (probably the same one that survived until the current development).
- 4.4.3 **Foundation trenches for House 4**
- 4.4.4 A series of strip foundations, c.1.25 m deep x 0.8 m wide were excavated for the new building. These followed the outline of the new house and included seven further trenches in the narrower western part of the building and five in the wider eastern part.
- 4.4.5 No evidence was found towards the south-eastern corner of the plot of any former continuation of the medieval barn or any adjacent contemporary range which the barn may formerly have adjoined. The eastern part of the plot was devoid of any archaeological remains. In this area a thin topsoil (c.20 cm deep) was observed on top of a chalky light-grey clay. The clay is relatively light rather than forming a solid mass. A large lump of concrete (0.4 m x 0.4 m) was observed just below the ground surface, c.6 m to the north-west of the south-east corner of House 4. This presumably related to a building which formed part of the modern farm complex.



- 4.4.6 Towards the northern end of the east range (ie towards the NE corner of the house) there was a slightly deeper topsoil (c.40 cm) than towards the south-eastern corner. This area is immediately adjacent to an area of fields and was presumably once arable. Below the overburden is the same light grey chalky clay.
- 4.4.7 In the central part of House 4 (ie beneath the recently demolished barn) the trenches comprises a deeper element of chalk than in the eastern part of House 4. The same clay is again found towards the base of the trenches but above this there is a deep layer of redeposited chalk with large blocks mixed in with smaller fragments and occasional bricks mixed in. This was probably a chalky hardcore laid for the barn.
- 4.4.8 Towards the western end of the north branch of trenches were three concrete foundation pads within the base of the trench. Each of these was c.40 cm x 40 cm. Towards the western end of House 4 the trenches comprised a redeposited chalk layer (c.25 cm deep) above a dark grey clay soil above a very dark brown/black soil.
- 4.4.9 At the north-western corner of the trenches the full depth of the excavation appears to be a modern redeposited layer with a combination of chalk fragments and ex-situ bricks (some possibly pre 19th century).
- 4.4.10 Towards the south-western corner of the foundation trenches was a modern drain and a short distance towards this (c.1.3 m NE from SW corner of House 4) were the remains of what appears to have been a WC or small outhouse (see Plates 14, 15). This was a single-skin brick-lined structure, c.1.5 m x 75 cm in plan and with a cement skim render to the inner faces. The structure comprised two identical chambers (two WC's?) and the brickwork appeared to be of probable late 19th century date. The bricks have frogs and they are bonded with an ochre colour cement mortar which is distinct from the grey skim which forms the inner lining. A considerable number of broken bottles had been deposited within each chamber and at c.60 cm below the current ground level there is a brick base. This structure almost certainly survives from the building which is shown in this location on the 1881 OS map.
- 4.4.11 Further to the east, at a point which is c.1 m to the west from the inner junction between the two ranges of House 4, a small stub from a brick wall. The stub appears to survive from a north to south wall and it may have continued south beyond the line of the current works. The footing comprises four courses of red brick, constructed with lime mortar and set directly on a chalk foundation. The brickwork strongly appears to be of 19th (or possibly late 18th) century date.
- 4.4.12 The ground level within each of the rooms of House 4 was not significantly reduced other than the removal of the modern concrete yard surface, but the tops of three timber posts were exposed at this horizon.
- 4.4.13 Two of these were very close to each other (c.30 cm apart) and c.11.7 m to the east of the farmhouse. The posts were c.3.5 m to the south of the alignment of the farmhouse's south facade. The main post in this area was removed (although the ground was not being reduced at this level) and it was 17 cm x 19 cm x 23 cm (tall). The softwood post was heavily worn and eroded.
- 4.4.14 The post was set directly on at least two or three bricks which appear to be in-situ and one of these was dug out of the small slot hole. The brick is handmade but regular in form and non-frogged. It is an orange/red colour with a dark, rough-quality glaze to one main face (ie top) and at least three of the four sides (the fourth side is lost). It is 4.75 cm tall by 8.6 cm wide and at least 20 cm long. The small size and character of the brick would suggest a pre-1700 date (possibly pre-1600) although it is difficult to provide an accurate date.



- 4.4.15 The regular size and glazing to the face of the brick suggests that it was made as a facing brick rather than as a rough brick to be used as a foundation or base for the post, and it is likely that it was reused from a previous building at the site. The other post was left in-situ.
- 4.4.16 The other post whose top was exposed was towards the south-western corner of the east range of House 4. This was not removed but its form appeared similar to the pair of posts referred to above. As the ground level in these areas was not being reduced it was not possible to investigate further the areas around and beneath these posts. However, the fact that post-medieval bricks were found beneath one (and that this brick may have been reused) suggests that the posts relate to post-medieval buildings, possibly one of those shown on the 1764 view (see Fig 3)
- 4.4.17 In addition to the foundation trenches for House 4 the monitoring works also included the digging of several service trenches around the southern, western and eastern edges of the east range of House 4. Each of these was c.1.25 m deep and they did not reveal any archaeological remains.

4.5 Service trenches

- 4.5.1 The main service trench which was observed (**Trench A**) started at the southern end of the site, approximately 100m west of the barn, and ran northwards towards the house. At the gateway of the house, it changed course and ran eastwards (**Trench B**), through the modern outbuildings and five metres from the north wall of the medieval barn. At the north east corner of the barn it changed course again and ran alongside the east wall where it terminates at the east entrance. This was opened and observed in July 2009.

4.5.2 Trench A

- 4.5.3 Towards the south length of trench A, beneath the topsoil, the stratigraphy was largely made up of a compact pale grey chalky clay with regular pebble inclusions. This would appear to be the natural layer on this site. However, approximately 250mm from the surface, there is a compact layer of red brick rubble which is 120mm at its widest. This would suggest that the clay above is redeposited natural.
- 4.5.4 Towards the north length of trench A, the length that is closer to the farm buildings and house, this layer of rubble became wider and consisted of more brown earth with frequent red brick rubble inclusions. Above this was a thin layer of redeposited natural.

4.5.5 Trench B

- 4.5.6 Trench B was mostly made up of compacted redeposited natural with a dark friable layer of asphalt over it.
- 4.5.7 The trench made a dog-leg turn adjacent to the north west corner of the medieval barn. No evidence could be found in the south side of the trench of foundations for the possible fourth bay of the medieval barn. The stratigraphy shows compact, possible redeposited natural with a thin layer of red brick rubble over it. Above this is a layer of modern cement.
- 4.5.8 There did however seem to be a construction feature directly across from this at the north side of the trench. Here there was evidence of a wall or foundation made up of roughly coursed and irregular red brick and flint with a loose friable grey mortar, the face of which faces west where the trench turns. It is likely to be the foundation for a now demolished, more modern outhouse rather than a foundation for the medieval barn.



- 4.5.9 The trench turned at the north-east corner of the barn and here also, there was no evidence of medieval foundation. The stratigraphy seemed to be entirely made up of re-deposited natural with a lensed layer of compact stone rubble under the modern cement. The sides of the trench that ran parallel with the east side of the medieval barn appeared to be made up of the same material but were largely obscured by water and building debris.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 Church Farm in Lewknor is a site of considerable historical importance due to the Grade I listed barn which is one of Oxfordshire's most interesting and significant medieval buildings.
- 5.1.2 The significance of the building partly lies in its considerable age, probably having been constructed in the second quarter of the 14th century but the interest is greatly enhanced by the fact that the barn appears to have been originally constructed as an important, high-status hall house. The Lewknor hall is an excellent example of high-quality domestic buildings built in the generation before the Black Death, with profligate use of timber (e.g. secondary wallplates), elaborate design (e.g. raised aisle construction), and decorative features such as cusping. These kinds of buildings have often been associated with county gentry, and there is every likelihood that John of Lewknor was indeed responsible for its construction.
- 5.1.3 There is also an added interest created by the suggestion that the completion of the building may have been interrupted by the Black Death of 1348-9 or that it may have resulted in the building never being fully occupied. The fact that the west end of the structure has been entirely reconstructed in the post-medieval period has raised the possibility that the building formerly extended further to the north or that it once adjoined a larger range at this end of the building.
- 5.1.4 The archaeological watching brief recently undertaken at Church Farm during the ground works for a residential development at the site opened a number of trenches to the north of the barn but no evidence was found to suggest that the barn formerly extended further in this direction.
- 5.1.5 A number of post-medieval features were found including two stubs of brick wall, the remains of a WC block and several posts, one of which was set on post-medieval brickwork. A possible terrace cut or lynchet was identified towards the west side of the site.
- 5.1.6 Houses 1-3 in the current development were located outside the historic farmyard and no evidence for any buildings or archaeological features (other than the possible lynchet) were identified in this area.
- 5.1.7 House 4 is located within the area of the historic farmyard but the ground in this area has been considerably disturbed by the construction of modern farm buildings and the concrete yard surface.

Oxford Archaeology
January 2011



APPENDIX A. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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**APPENDIX B. LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS FOR CHURCH FARM BARN AND HOUSE**

Building Name: Church Farm, Barn Approximately 30 Metres East South East Of Farmhouse (not Included)

Parish: Lewknor District: South Oxfordshire
LBS Number: 248940 Grade: I
Date Listed: 19 November 1976

National Grid Reference: SU7150697658

LEWKNOR CHURCH ROAD**GV I**

SU7197 (East side) 10/94 Church Farm, barn approx. 30m.
19/11/76 ESE of farmhouse (not included) (Formerly listed as The Old Barn at Church Farm)

House, now barn. Mid/late C14. C20 weatherboarding over heavy timber framing on brick base; half-hipped roof, old tiles to left and C20 tiles to right. Aisled 3-bay hall. C20 plank double doors. Interior: left end wall has 8 panels of which top 4 are cusped. Left truss: arch braces from wall to tie beam were reset to centre when aisle posts were inserted to support long tie beam; queen-post truss with tension-braced collar and arch braces to tie: arch-braced collar above with clasped purlins, diminishing principals and wind braces. Right spere truss: of similar construction, but lower aisled part has arch-braced aisle posts flanked by trefoil-cusped aisles. Probably built by John de Lewknor, who rebuilt the east end of the church (q.v.) in the Decorated style c.1320-40. Church Farm was acquired by All Souls College from Abingdon Abbey in 1340. Morrey and Smith date the barn to between 1350 and 1440. (Buildings of England: Oxfordshire, p.684; J.M. Fletcher, *The Medieval Hall at Lewknor*; Oxonensia, Vol.40 (1975); M.C.J. Morrey and J.T. Smith, *The Great Barn Lewknor, the architectural evidence*; Oxonensia, Vol.38 (1973), pp.339-349; Eric Mercer, *English Vernacular Houses*, 1975, p.194; National Monuments Record).

Building Name: Church Farm

Parish: Lewknor District: South Oxfordshire
LBS Number: 504424 Grade: II
Date Listed: 15 February 2008
National Grid Reference: SU7145397674

1696/0/10007 Church Farm
15-FEB-08

GV II

Farmhouse with perhaps later C16 core, cased in brick and partly rebuilt in later C18; some C20 rebuilding and additions.

EXTERIOR: Church Farm farmhouse is a brick-cased, south-east facing building of three front bays and two storeys, with dormer windows lighting converted attics. The brick casing to the front is typical of the area in that it exhibits the decorative use of blue headers; it is of two phases, probably fairly close in date and of the later C18. The left-hand two bays are the older, the brickwork irregularly bonded with reddish bricks with dark blue headers. This is a refronting, later in date than the narrow-bricked gable wall to the left which is probably of the late C17 or early



C18 (projecting early C20 ground-floor window bay not of interest). The right-hand front bay is of a more orangey brick, in a regular Flemish bond with blue brick headers producing a chequered pattern. This probably represents a rebuilding of this end of the property (shown with an end-jetty on an illustration of 1764), extending to include a short, integral, single-storey range to the rear. Front door to the centre (immediately against the right edge of the older two bays); C20 brick porch (not of interest). The windows give an approximate symmetry to the front: three-light casements to the end bays (those to the ground floor slightly longer than those above) with a small two-light casement to the centre of the first floor, and a small pair of four-pane casements to the left of the front door lighting the staircase within. Most of the windows have been renewed in uPVC.

To the rear-right a large external chimney stack with flint and stone lower part and brick above is recognisably that shown on the illustration of 1764. A similar (but presumably rebuilt) chimney rises from the rear-left. C20 brick lean-tos against the rear of the house and against the c.1800 rear range are not of interest, nor is the C20 brick extension to the c.1800 rear range.

The roof is of red tile, relaid when the roof was partly replaced in the early C20; two brick stacks of this date rise from the centre of the older two bays and from the right-hand gable.

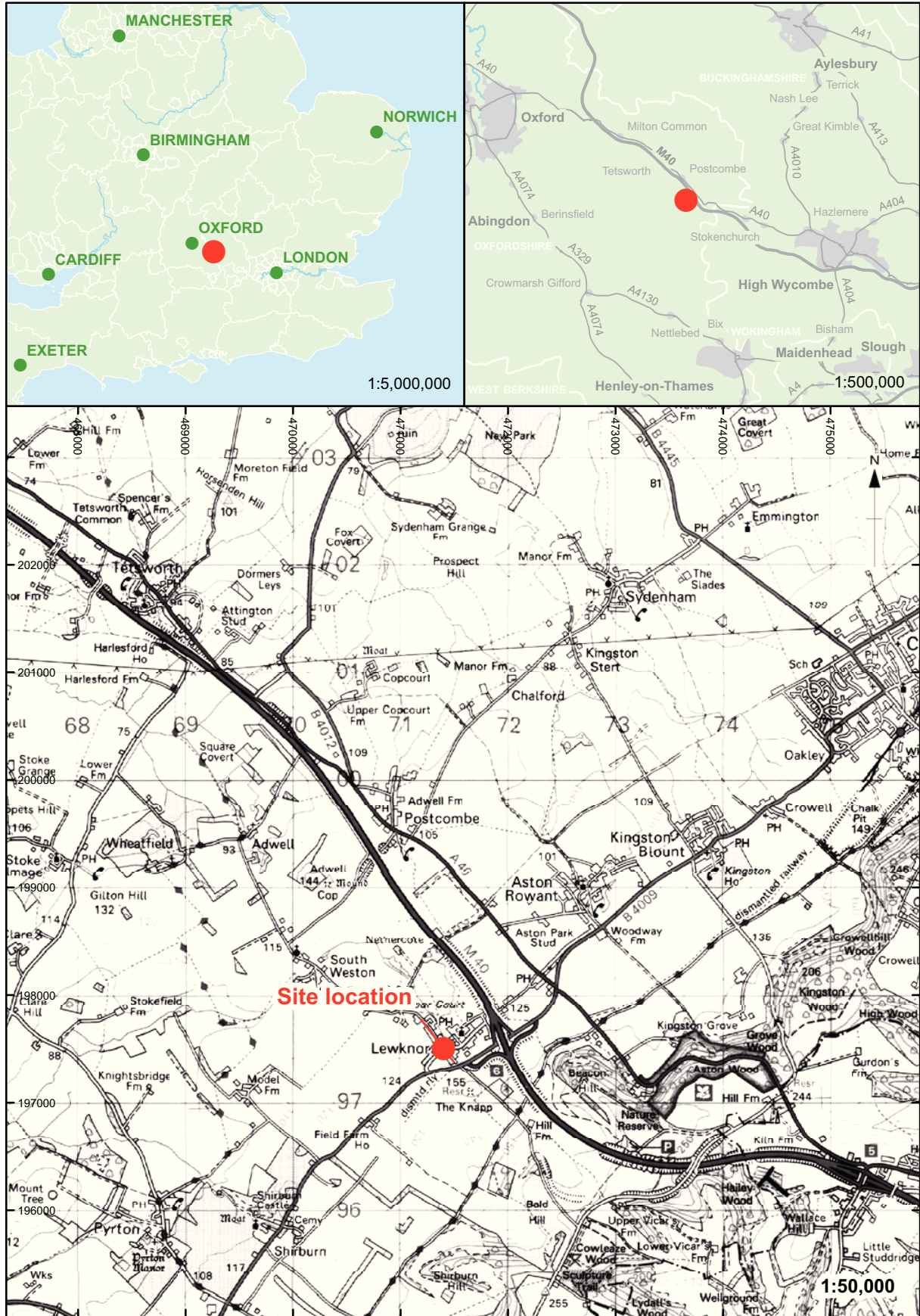
INTERIOR: The front door opens into a hall which extends the full depth of the property, and which extends left of the door (as entered) where a simple staircase of c.1800 leads off at right angles against the outside wall. Front room with kitchen behind in right-hand bay; dining room in left-hand bay; and small office in centre bay with bathroom behind. Upstairs the plan is roughly replicated, and there are some surviving planked doors, perhaps C18. There is also a curved brace visible in the centre-rear first-floor bedroom relating to the possible crown post roof above. The staircase continues to the attic floor with a bedroom in each end bay (only that to the right with fireplace) and a store room to the centre. The attic rooms are set within the probably later C16 roof; this survives largely intact in the older two bays with tie beams, collars and common rafters (and thus possibly of crown-post type), as seen most clearly in the closed attic space over the collars. Over the newer bay is a replacement roof of the early C20.

HISTORY: Church Farm is identified by the Victoria County History as the rectory farm, the living being in the possession of All Souls College from 1440. It was therefore either the college, or its tenants by agreement, which successively built and rebuilt the farmhouse. The Church Farm complex stands immediately west of St Margaret's church (listed Grade I) on the north edge of Lewknor. The complex includes, on its east edge, a Grade I listed building, a mid-C14 aisled house which was later converted to a barn.

SOURCES: Victoria History of the County of Oxford 8 (1964), 98-115; J M Fletcher, 'The medieval hall at Lewknor', *Oxoniensia* 40 (1975), 247-53; A Quiney, *The Traditional Buildings of England* (1990), 54.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION DECISION: Church Farm farmhouse, Lewknor, is listed for the following principal reasons:

- * its core is essentially of the later C16, as shown on an illustration of 1764
- * two-thirds of the roof of this date is extant
- * for its attractive external brick casing of the late C18
- * for its setting: its buildings include a Grade I listed C14 barn, beyond which is the parish church (Grade I) with which Church Farm was associated tenurially.



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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: 1815 Enclosure map

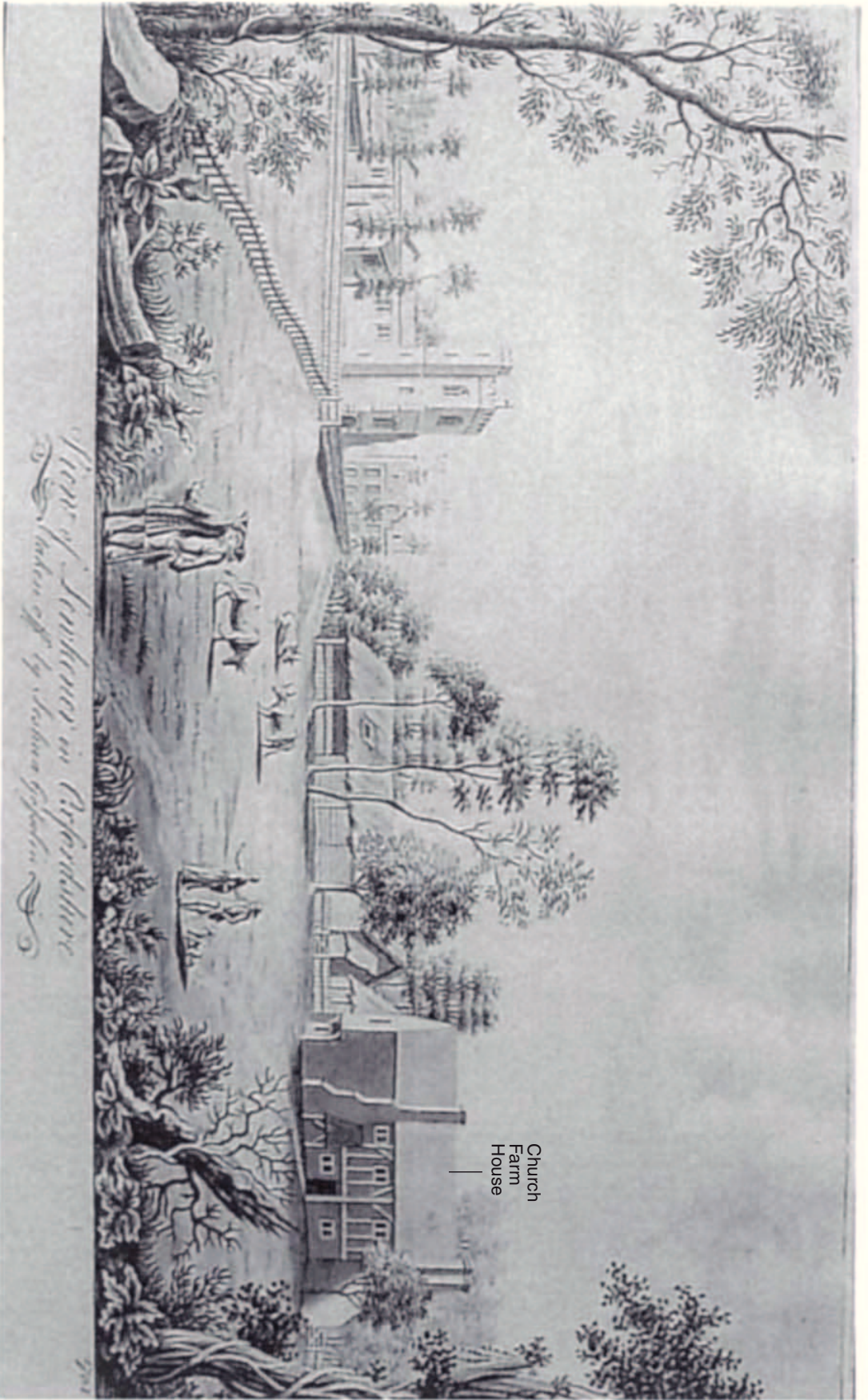


Figure 3: View of the site from the north in 1764

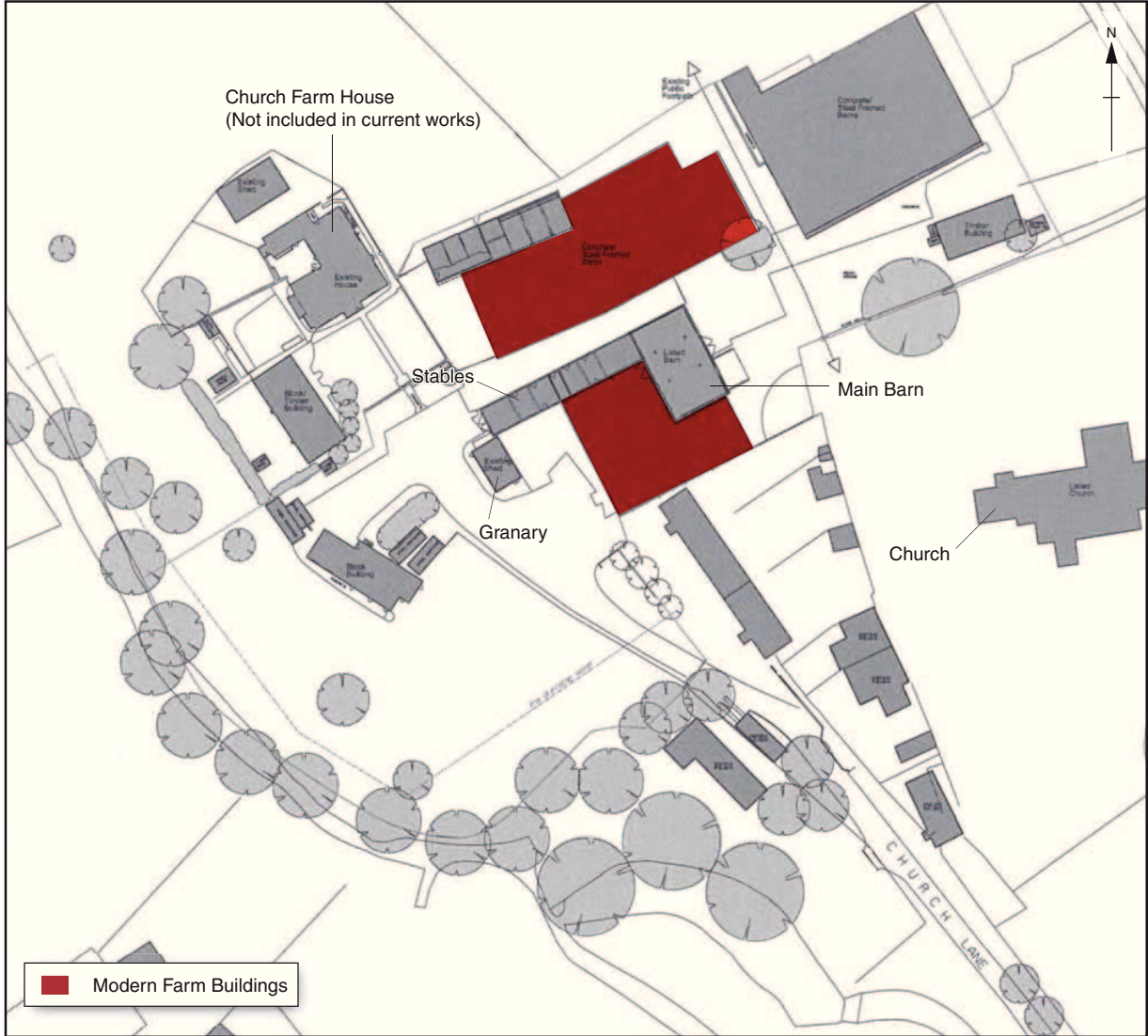


Figure 4: Site plan prior to current works

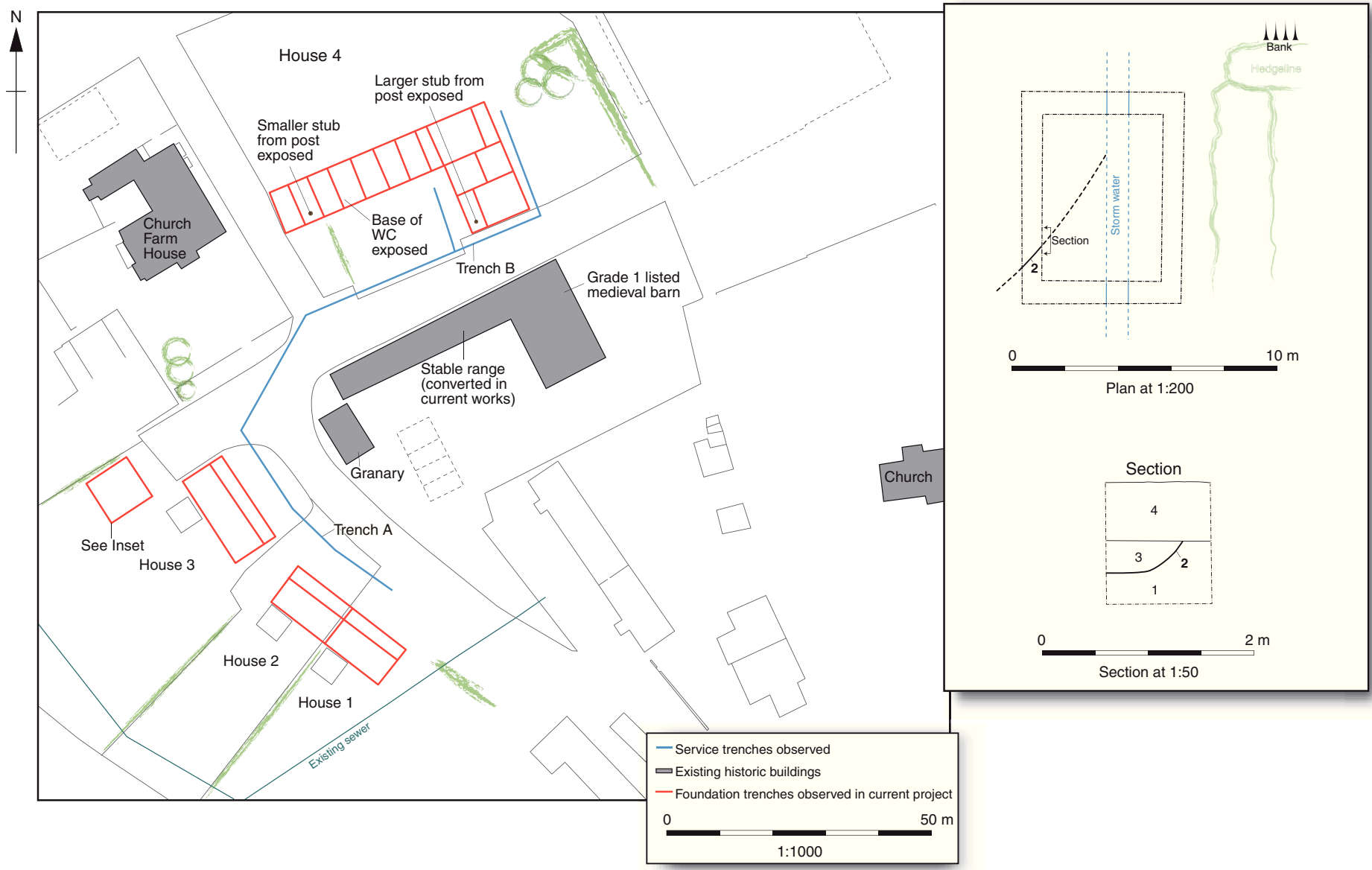


Figure 5: Site plan showing areas investigated, with inset: plan and section from foundations of garage



Plate 1: West side of Service Trench A to east of Houses 1-3



Plate 2: Construction feature in Service Trench B to north of barn



Plate 3: General view of excavations for House 3



Plate 4: General view from east of excavations for House 4



Plate 5: South side of Service Trench B immediately to north of junction between stables and medieval barn



Plate 6: General view from south of excavations for House 3



Plate 7: Foundation trench (N-S) for House 3



Plate 8: Stub of brick wall towards centre of excavations for House 4



Plate 9: Stub of brick wall towards centre of excavations for House 4



Plate 10: General view from north of trenches towards centre of House 4



Plate 11: Trenches at west end of House 4



Plate 12: Trenches at east end of House 4



Plate 13: Trenches at south-east corner of House 4



Plate 14: View from south of trenches in House 4 including remains of WC



Plate 15: Remains of WC block in House 4 viewed from west



Plate 16: View of foundations for House 4



Plate 17: View from south of trench towards west end of House 4



Plate 18: General view towards north-east corner of trenches for House 4



Plate 19: Foundation trench at south-west corner of East Range of House 4



Plate 20: Area to north of medieval barn



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