

Dene House Yarnells Hill North Hinksey Oxfordshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



January 2006

Client: J A Pye Estates Ltd

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**Dene House,
Yarnells Hill, North Hinksey, Oxfordshire**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

On 8th September 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Dene House, Yarnells Hill, North Hinksey, Oxfordshire (NGR: SU4880 0497). The work was commissioned by J A Pye Estates in advance of the demolition of an existing building and the construction of 4 new dwellings. The watching brief revealed that the area had been truncated down to undisturbed natural during the construction of the original building and that no archaeological potential remained.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 On 8th September 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Dene House, Yarnells Hill, North Hinksey, Oxfordshire (NGR: SU 4880 0497). The work was commissioned by J A Pye Estates in respect of a planning application for the demolition of an existing dwelling and the construction of 4 new dwellings (Planning Application No. NHI/3126/1 and NHI/3126/2).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Hugh Coddington, the Deputy County Archaeological Officer representing the Vale of White Horse District Council (OCAS, 2005).
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2005).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The development site is located approximately 2 km to the south-west of Oxford (Fig. 1). The site itself is located to the south of the junction between Yarnells Hill and Lime Road in North Hinksey. The site is terraced into a south-east facing hill and lies at approximately 112 m OD and occupies an area of 0.48 hectares. The underlying geology is loam overlying Kimmeridge clay and limestone brash (British Geological survey sheet no. 236).
- 1.2.2 The site originally contained a single domestic dwelling within a landscaped garden setting.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA, 2005) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 A survey of crop marks on the Thames River Gravels by the then Air Photographic Unit of the RCHME (Royal Commission on Historic Monuments, England) identified a circular enclosure on the south-eastern boundary of the application site.

This has been identified as a Bronze Age ring ditch although there has been no fieldwork to verify this.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological deposits or features that the works may disturb or destroy.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a single site visit immediately after demolition of the existing house and the clearance of the site.
- 2.2.2 A plan of the area observed was drawn at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20 (Fig. 3). The site was photographed using a colour digital camera. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The underlying natural, a limestone brash within a yellow-brown clay matrix (2) was encountered at a depth of 0.3 m below the current ground level. In the areas where the original garden had been terraced, this could be seen to be in excess of 1.8 m deep. A number of tree root hollows could be observed within the surface of this deposit along the northern edge of the site.
- 3.1.2 This had been sealed by a 0.3 m deep layer of dark grey-brown clay loam (1) throughout the garden area of the site.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No dating evidence was recovered during the course of the watching brief.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief showed that the area had been substantially truncated during earlier landscaping of the site. This depth of reduction was such that any stratigraphy with archaeological potential had been removed completely, with only deeper natural intrusions such as the tree root hollows previously noted surviving. These probably date from clearance of the site for the original construction. No evidence for the continuation of the circular enclosure observed on the aerial photographs was encountered.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.3 m	-	Modern garden soil	-	C20th
2	Layer	> 1.8 m	-	Natural clay and cornbrash	-	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA, 2005 *Dene House, Yarnells Hill, North Hinksey, Oxfordshire : Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

OAU, 1992 *Field Manual (1st edition ed. Wilkinson D)*

OCAS, 2005 *Dene House, Yarnells Hill, North Hinksey: Design Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Dene House, Yarnells Hill, North Hinksey, Oxfordshire

Site code: OXYADH05

Grid reference: SU 4880 0497

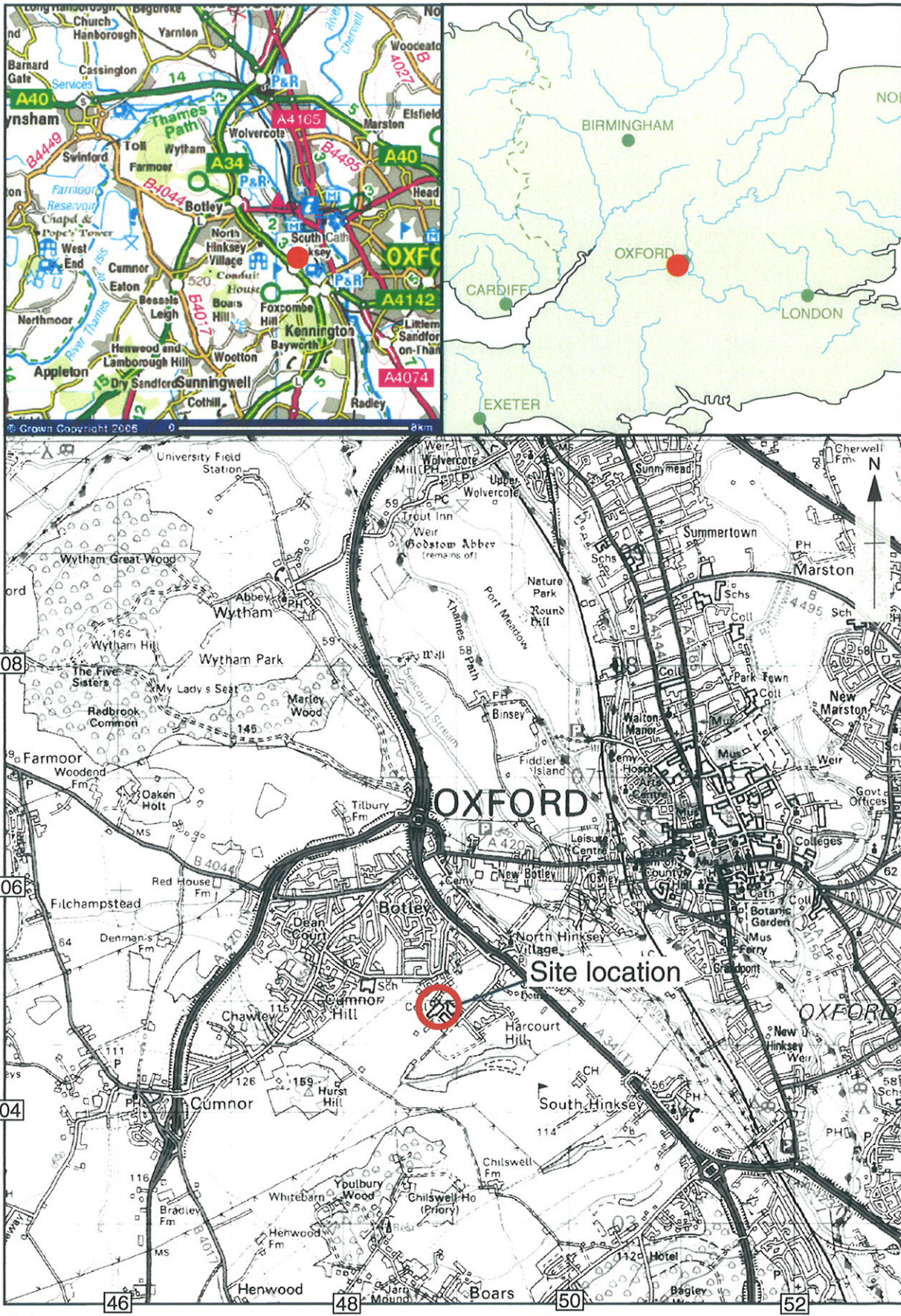
Type of watching brief: Machine stripping of development site

Date and duration of project: 8/9/05, 1 day

Area of site: 0.48 hectares

Summary of results: Area of site had been completely truncated by earlier landscaping, no archaeological potential left

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OCMS.2005.73



Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

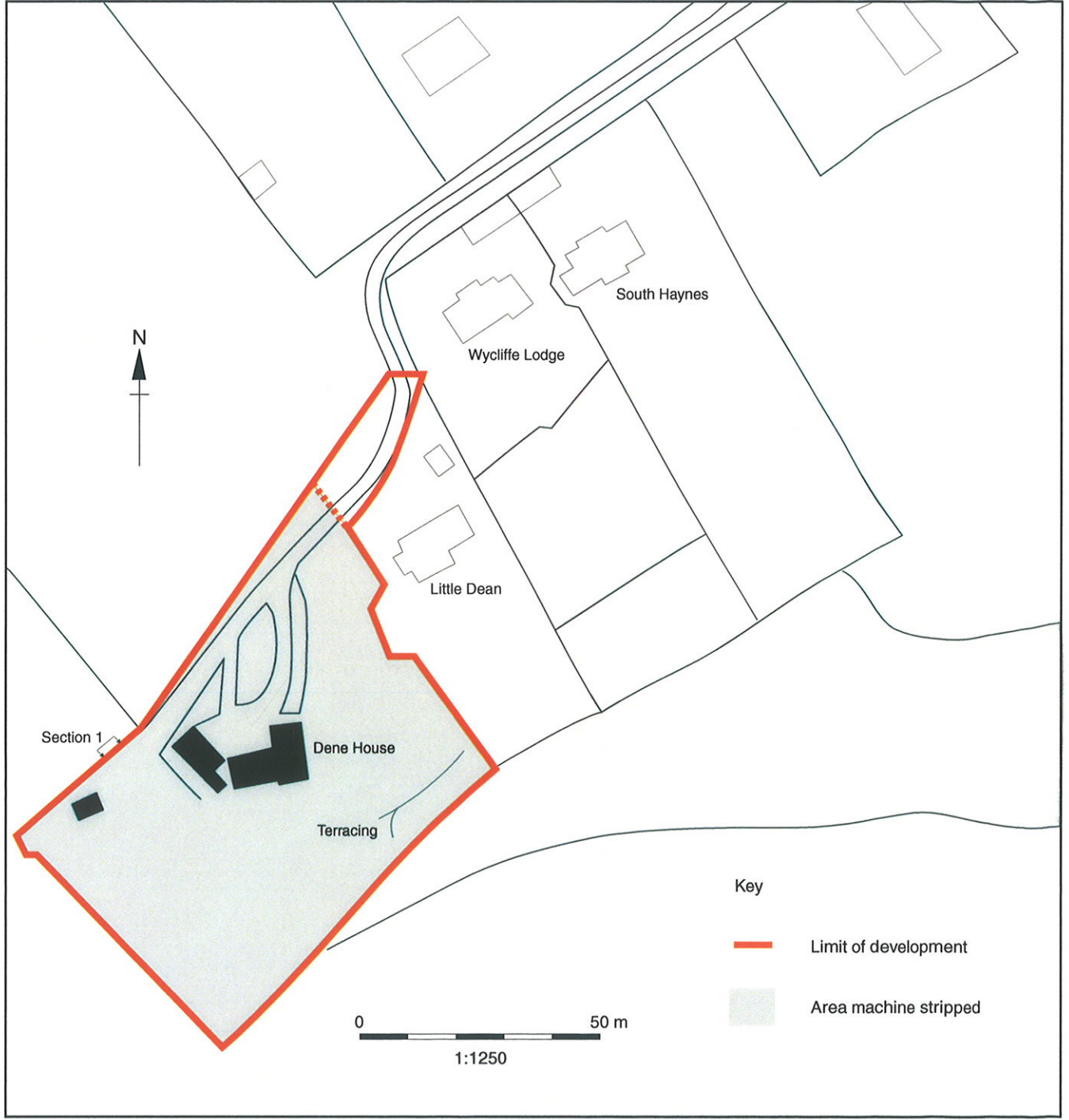


Figure 2: Area of watching brief

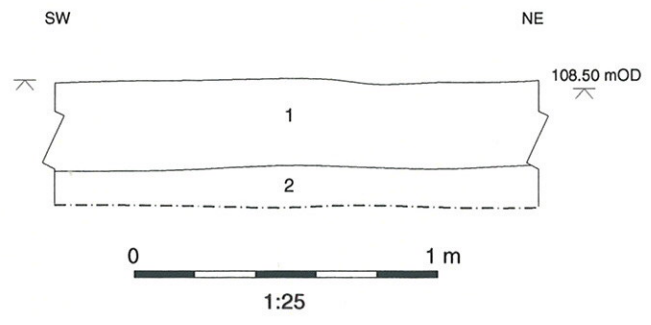


Figure 3: Section 1



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