



Harpsden Court, Harpsden Way, Harpsden, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation Report

June 2020

Client: Mr. Ian Wason

Issue No: 1

OA Reference No: HAPOOL19

NGR: SU 76330 80871



Client Name: Ian Wason
Client Ref No.: Harpsden Court, Harpsden Way, Harpsden, Oxfordshire
Document Title: Harpsden Court, Harpsden Way, Harpsden, Oxfordshire,
Document Type: Strip, Map and Sample Excavation report
Grid Reference: NGR SU 76330 80871
Planning Reference: P19/S4381/HH
Site Code: HAPOOL19
Invoice Code: HAPOOLWB
Receiving Body: Oxfordshire County Museum Service
Accession No.: OXCMS: 2020.44

OA Document File Location: \\10.0.10.86\Projects\h\Harpsden Court\Rep
OA Graphics File Location: \\10.0.10.86\Projects\h\Harpsden Court\GIS

Issue No: 1
Date: June 2020
Prepared by: Paul Murray (Project Officer)
Checked by: John Boothroyd (Senior Project Manager)
Edited by: Gerry Thacker (Senior Project Manager)
Approved for Issue by: David Score (Head of Fieldwork)
Signature:



Disclaimer:

This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.

OA South

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0ES

t. +44 (0)1865 263 800

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridge
CB23 8SQ

t. +44 (0)1223 850 500

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane Mills
Moor Lane
Lancaster
LA1 1QD

t. +44 (0)1524 880 250

e. info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w. oxfordarchaeology.com

Oxford Archaeology is a registered Charity: No. 285627



Director and Chief Executive
Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCIFA
Private Limited Company, No: 1618597
Registered Charity, No: 285627
Registered Office: Oxford Archaeology Ltd
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES

Harpsden Court, Harpsden Way, Harpsden, Oxfordshire

Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation Report

Written by Paul Murray

With contributions from Matt Bradley and Magda Wachnik.

Contents

Summary.....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Scope of work.....	1
1.2 Location, topography, and geology	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	1
2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY.....	3
2.1 General	3
2.2 Specific aims and objectives	3
2.3 Methodology	3
3 RESULTS	4
3.1 Introduction and presentation of results.....	4
3.2 General soils and ground conditions.....	4
3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits	4
3.4 Description of deposits	4
3.5 Finds summary.....	4
4 DISCUSSION	5
4.1 Reliability of field investigation.....	5
4.2 Objectives and results.....	5
APPENDIX A BIBLIOGRAPHY	6
APPENDIX B SITE SUMMARY DETAILS	7

List of Figures

- Fig.1 Site location
Fig.2 Location of proposed swimming pool as excavated

List of Plates

- Plate 1 General shot of works

Summary

Oxford Archaeology was commissioned by Mr. Ian Wason to undertake a watching brief during intrusive works associated with the construction of a swimming pool at Harpsden Court, Harpsden Way, Harpsden, Oxfordshire.

The watching brief was carried out in a single day on the 12 May 2020. The watching brief did not identify any archaeological features or deposits.

Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Ian Wason for commissioning this project. Thanks, are also extended to Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist at Oxfordshire County Council, who monitored the work.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by John Boothroyd. Lee Sparks directed the fieldwork. Survey and digitising were undertaken by Conan Parsons. Thanks is also extended to the teams of OA staff that prepared the archive under the management of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Ian Wason to undertake a strip, map and sample excavation of the footprint of a proposed swimming pool.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref: P19/S4381/HH). Although the local planning authority did not set a brief for the work, discussions with Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist at Oxfordshire County Council, established the scope of work required, and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) was produced by OA (OA 2020) detailing the Local Authority's requirements. This document outlines how OA implemented those requirements.
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies and the relevant guidance issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014).

1.2 Location, topography, and geology

- 1.2.1 The site lies within the grounds and immediately to the north-west of Harpsden Court, a large II* listed country house, probably of 17th century date (listing no. 1047412). It is bounded to the north by the church yard wall of St Margaret's Church.
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development consists of a wooded area (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is mapped as white chalk of the Upper Cretaceous (BGS 2020)

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of Harpsden parish including a detailed history of Harpsden Court has been published online by Victoria County History (Townley 2001). Relevant extracts are reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 Neighbouring areas show signs of considerable Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze-Age activity, and a number of Mesolithic flints have been found in Harpsden High Wood. By the Iron Age (c 700 BC to 50 AD) there is evidence of permanent settlement to the east, close to the River Thames. On the parish boundary at the northern end of the river floodplain, crop marks near Sheephouse Farm show a rectangular ditched enclosure, and possibly another enclosure to the north. Excavations just over half a mile south near Lower Bolney Farm suggest a second settlement which was in use c 400–100 BC, and which was perhaps abandoned because of flooding and alluvial deposition. The Sheephouse Farm site may have been of similar date. Further south-west a hoard of 17 Gallo-Belgic coins (mostly minted c 60 BC) were found in Harpsden Wood.
- 1.3.3 Romano-British finds have been concentrated on the higher ground in and to the south of Harpsden Wood. On the southern edge of High Wood there appears to be the remains of a building (not certainly a villa) which shows evidence of occupation into the 4th century. Half a mile to the north-east was a large winged corridor villa near Harpsden Wood House, apparently occupied in the 3rd to earlier 4th centuries.

- 1.3.4 Given its fairly substantial Domesday population, Harpsden must have shared in the widespread intensification of farming (and presumably growth of settlement) in the 9th to 11th centuries. The hythe at Bolney may have provided an early focus for settlement, and the establishment of the Harpsden and Bolney estates before the mid-11th century must have involved the creation of two separate estate centres, almost certainly on the sites occupied by the later manor houses at Harpsden Court and Bolney Court.
- 1.3.5 Harpsden Court, next to Harpsden church, was the residence of the lords of Harpsden manor from the Middle Ages to the mid-19th century. Now a private home, which lost its remaining farmland in 1975, this small- to medium-sized country house represents the vestiges of a much larger complex, and incorporates elements from many periods. Embedded in the middle of what is now the main range are remains of a thick-walled, tower-like medieval structure, which probably included a first-floor solar, and may have been fortified; with architectural details suggesting a late 12th- or 13th-century date. Possibly it was attached to a hall, of which no trace now remains. In the early 16th century the house was a 'large manor place with double courts', implying a collection of medieval buildings around upper and lower courtyards. Traces of that arrangement survived in 1586 as depicted on the Blagrave Map which shows a number of outbuildings close or perhaps within the location of the proposed swimming pool. Harpsden Court was much altered by the Hall family thereafter before they finally sold the estate in 1885.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

- 2.1.1 The project aims were to monitor the stripping of the area of the proposed swimming pool and to investigate and record any archaeological remains present.

2.2 Specific aims and objectives

- 2.2.1 The project aims and objectives were as follows:
- i. To determine or confirm the general nature of any remains present.
 - ii. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
 - iii. In particular, to ascertain if such remains pertain to the medieval and later manor at Harpsden Court.
 - iv. To make available the results of the investigation.

2.3 Methodology

- 2.3.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the methodology outlined in the WSI.
- 2.3.2 The footprint of the swimming pool, an area of approximately 74m², was excavated using a 3t tracked 360° excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under archaeological supervision. Excavation continued in spits of no more than 0.2m until the top of undisturbed natural geology was exposed.
- 2.3.3 The exposed surface was sufficiently clean to establish the absence of archaeological remains. All deposits were issued unique context numbers and recorded using OA proforma sheets in line with industry best practice.
- 2.3.4 Digital photographs were taken on the trenches and works in general.
- 2.3.5 Upon completion of the archaeological works, and in agreement with the planning archaeologist, the area was handed over to the contractor for development. As the fieldwork was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic, monitoring of the fieldwork by the Planning Archaeologist was done remotely using digital photographs.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 The results of the strip, map and sample excavation are presented below, and include a stratigraphic description of deposits.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The soil sequence was uniform. The natural geology of chalk was overlain by the current topsoil.
- 3.2.2 Ground conditions throughout the excavation were good, and the site remained dry throughout. Features were easy to identify against the underlying natural geology.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

- 3.3.1 No archaeological features or deposits were revealed during the work. A potential linear feature of potential archaeological interest was noted as crossing the northern half of the area on an east-west alignment. However, investigation of the feature revealed it to be a service trench of suspected 19th / early 20th century date (Fig. 2).

3.4 Description of deposits

- 3.4.1 The geological horizon comprised a firm, light brownish white chalk, and was established at a depth of 0.4m below ground level. Topsoil was the only deposit overlying the geology.

3.5 Finds summary

- 3.5.1 No artefacts were noted or recovered during the excavation.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 The geological horizon was clearly established (Plate. 1). A potential archaeological feature was investigated and established to be a service trench of recent date.

4.2 Objectives and results

- 4.2.1 The overall aims and objects for the strip, map and sample excavated were to expose, identify, characterise and recorded any archaeological remains that survive within the footprint of the proposed swimming pool. This was achieved through the exposure of natural geological horizon across the area. No features of archaeological interest were identified during the works.

APPENDIX A BIBLIOGRAPHY

BGS, 2020 British Geological Survey Viewer. Available at:
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> [accessed 14 February 2020].

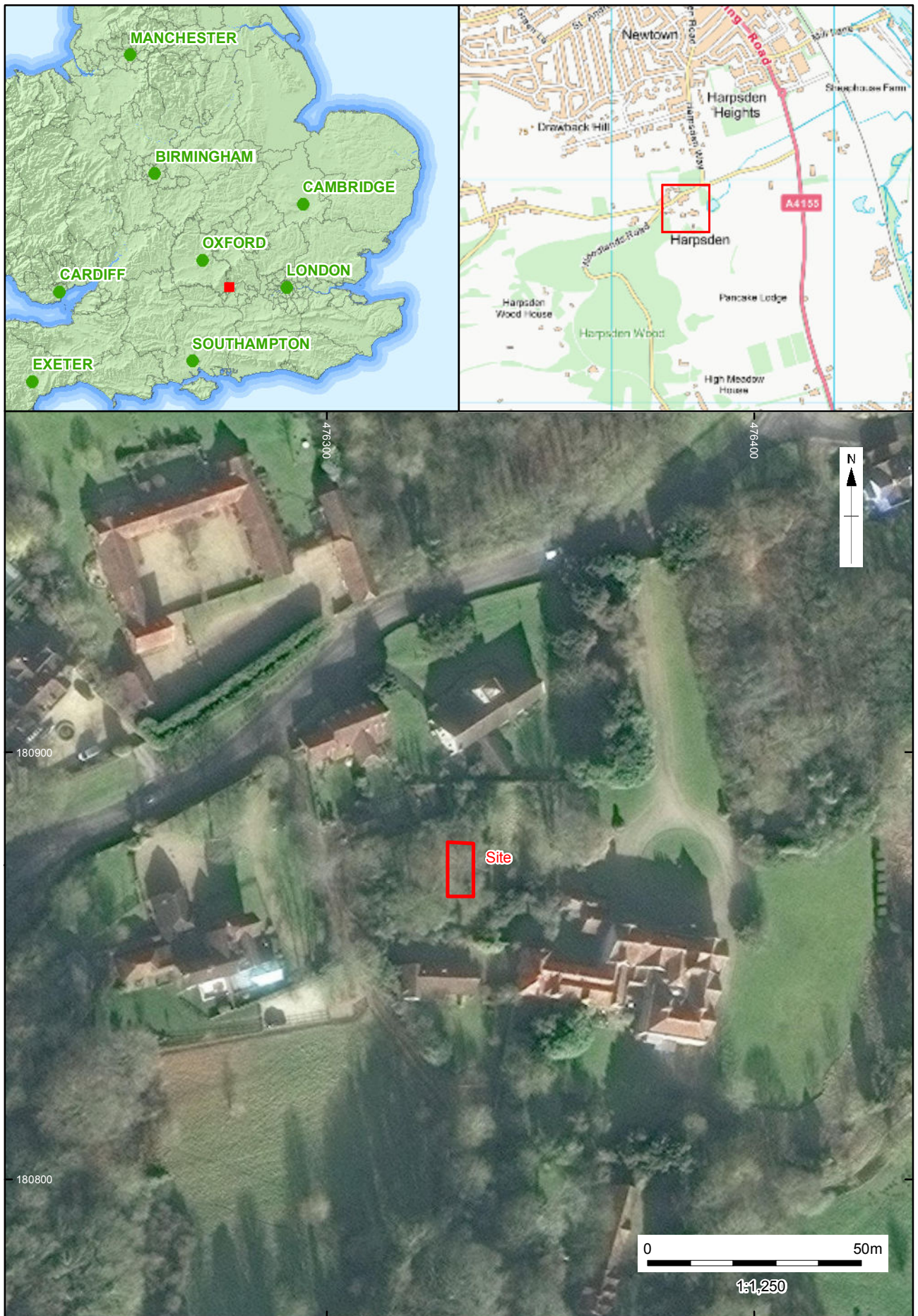
CIfA, 2014 *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Excavation*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, Reading

OA, 2020 Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation

Townley, S (ed.), 2011 Rural Parishes: Harpsden, in *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 16*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2011), 231-65, *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol16/pp231-265> [accessed 14 February 2020].

APPENDIX B**SITE SUMMARY DETAILS**

Site name:	Harpsden Court, Harpsden Way, Harpsden, Oxfordshire
Site code:	HAPOOL19
Grid Reference	NGR SU 76330 80871
Type:	Strip, map and sample excavation
Date and duration:	Single visit: 16/5/2020
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA and will be deposited with Oxford Museum Services in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS: 2020.44
Summary of Results:	No archaeological features or deposits were revealed.



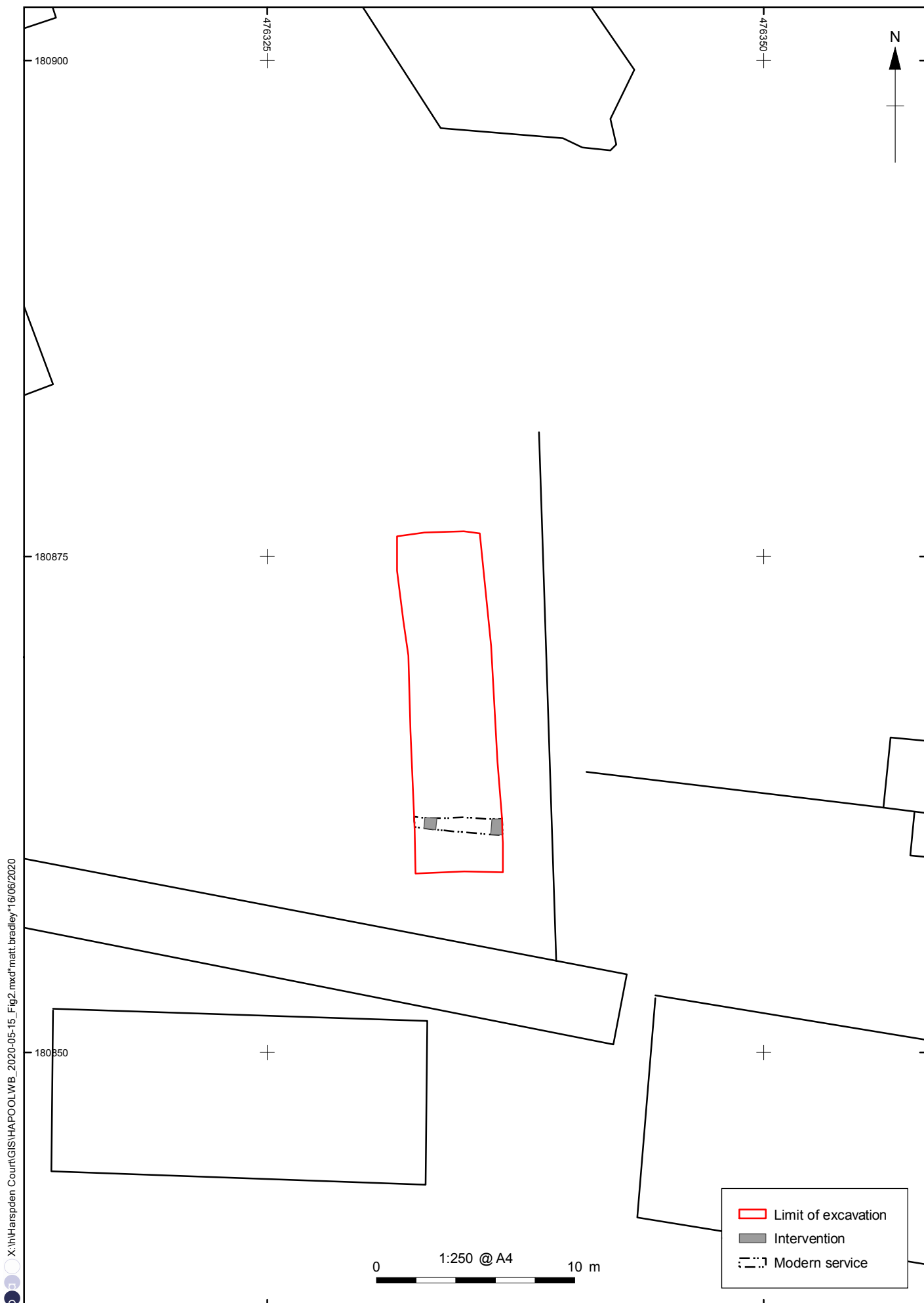


Figure 2: Location of proposed swimming pool as excavated



Plate 1: General shot of works - view to north



**Head Office/Registered Office/
OA South**

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1QD

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850 500
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



Director: Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCIfA
*Oxford Archaeology Ltd is a
Private Limited Company, N^o: 1618597
and a Registered Charity, N^o: 285627*