



# Nuffield Place, IT Cable Trench

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

May 2018

**Client: National Trust**

Issue No: 1

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NGR: SU 67871 87792

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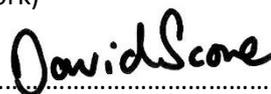


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**Nuffield Place, IT Cable Trench**  
***Archaeological Watching Brief Report***

*Written by Mark Dodd*

*With illustrations by Gary Jones*

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## Summary

Over the course of two days from the 27th March to 28th March, 2018, Oxford Archaeology monitored the excavation of an IT cable trench through the grounds of Nuffield Place for the National Trust. No archaeologically significant deposits were observed and no artefacts were encountered.

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## Acknowledgements

Oxford Archaeology would like to thank the National Trust for commissioning this project.

The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by John Boothroyd and the fieldwork was undertaken by Robin Bashford. The figures were produced by Gary Jones.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Scope of work**

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by the National Trust to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the installation of a fibre optic communication cable at Nuffield Place, Oxfordshire.

### **1.2 Location, topography and geology**

- 1.2.1 The site is located c 1km north-east of the village of Nuffield, on the north side of the A4130, formerly a major route linking Oxford to London. It is bounded to the west by a large field, to the north by Huntercombe Manor and to the east by woodland and Nuffield Court (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.2 The site is situated within chalk escarpment of the Chiltern Hills and lies on the western slope of a hill, the summit of which lies within Park Wood. The underlying solid geology is mapped as Lambeth Group - Clay, Silt and Sand, sedimentary Bedrock that formed approximately 48 to 59 million years ago in the Palaeogene Period. This is overlain by superficial deposits of the Clay-with-flints Formation - Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel (BGS Online).
- 1.2.3 The site slopes downwards to the west, ranging from a maximum height of 214m OD at its eastern boundary to a height of 204m OD at the western boundary.

### **1.3 Archaeological and historical background**

- 1.3.1 The area of the cable route trench was the subject of a Desk-based assessment as part of a separate development (OA 2016). This investigation asserted that the site has a high potential for archaeological remains dating to the medieval, post-medieval and modern periods, and a moderate potential for Iron Age and Roman remains. There is also an underlying potential for agricultural remains dating to the early-medieval period. It was also noted that site has been subject to 19th-and 20th-century disturbance resulting from the construction of Nuffield Place and gardens, but suggested that outside these areas of disturbance, archaeological remains are likely to be well preserved.

## **2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Aims**

2.1.1 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. To mitigate the impacts of the cable trench on any buried archaeological deposits or features;
- iv. To contextualise the findings within the local and regional landscapes;
- v. To make available the results of the watching brief.

### **2.2 Methodology**

2.2.1 The watching brief was carried out over two days during the excavation of the cable, between 27th March 2018 and 28th March 2018.

2.2.2 The cable trench was excavated using a mechanical excavator to a depth of between 0.55m and 0.85m below ground level, with a toothless bucket c 0.3m wide.

2.2.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with the ClfA Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief (ClfA, 2014).

### 3 RESULTS

- 3.1.1 The excavation of the cable trench began on the western side of Bradley Road, which runs north south along the to the west boundary of Nuffield Place (Fig. 2). From here the trench was excavated along the roadside verge before crossing into the property on the southern side of the main iron gates. The trench then continued along the southern side of the access road, again within the roadside verge, before crossing in front of the visitor reception and heading around the eastern side of the house (Plates 2 and 3). The cable then enters the building in the south-east corner of the property.
- 3.1.2 A simple sequence of deposits was revealed along the length of the cable trench. The geology of brown clay with flint nodules was overlain by a possible colluvial layer of brown clayey silt. Within the existing driveway, the colluvial deposit was overlain by a layer of compacted chalk, between 0.15m and 0.2m thick where present.
- 3.1.3 No archaeologically significant features or deposits were encountered, and no artefacts were recovered during this investigation.

## **4 DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Reliability of field investigation**

4.1.1 The deposits in the trench were clearly visible throughout the excavation works, without hindrance from the weather or the construction works and the natural geology was exposed along the length of the trench. It should be noted that although clearly visible, observing any deposit within such a narrow trench does make it difficult to confidently interpret the nature and origin of any material. However, in this instance, the simplicity of the stratigraphy and the lack of associated material culture means it is possible to be confident in interpreting the observations.

### **4.2 Evaluation objectives and results**

4.2.1 The watching brief demonstrated that there were no archaeological remains present within the route of the cable trench.

### **4.3 Interpretation**

4.3.1 The thick chalk deposit was almost certainly laid down as a make-up layer, serving as consolidation for the existing driveway. Despite the high potential for archaeological remains in the vicinity, none survived in the footprint of this cable trench.

### **4.4 Significance**

4.4.1 No significant discoveries were made during the course of this watching brief. However, it should be noted that the area investigated was small and does not reduce the potential for remains in the surrounding areas.

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## APPENDIX A      BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## APPENDIX B

## SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

<b>Site name:</b>	Nuffield Place, IT Cable Trench
<b>Site code:</b>	NUITCA 18
<b>Grid Reference</b>	SU 67871 87792
<b>Type:</b>	Watching Brief
<b>Date and duration:</b>	2 days (27/03/18 to 28/03/18)
<b>Area of Site</b>	c. 3.7ha
<b>Location of archive:</b>	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS:2018.33.
<b>Summary of Results:</b>	The excavation of an IT cable trench was monitored over the course of two days. No archaeologically significant remains were observed.

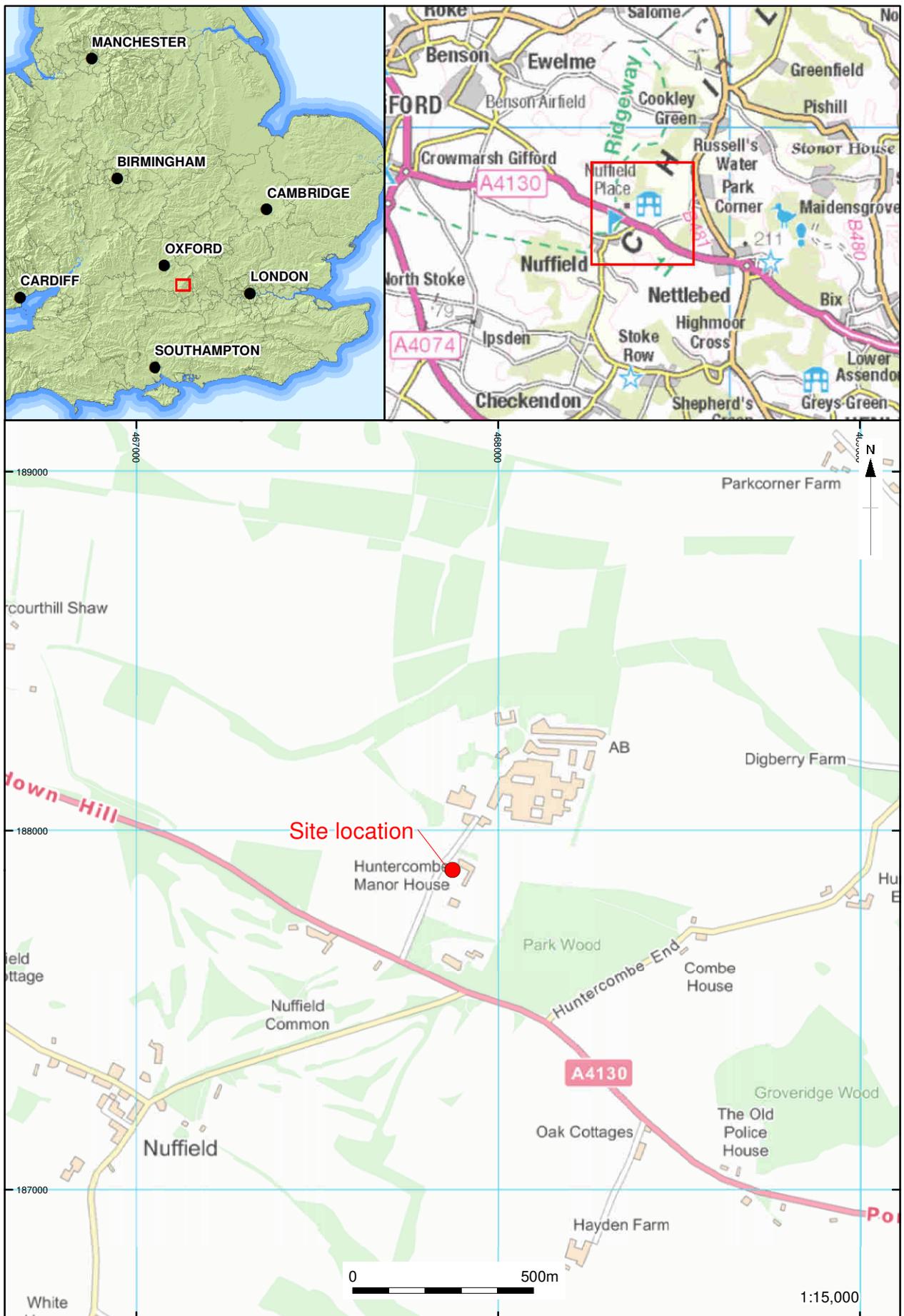


Figure 1: Site location



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Figure 2: Cable trench route



Plate 1: General shot of trench, view to E



Plate 2: General shot of trench, view to N





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