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LINDSEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

The Moat House, Sutton Rd, Markby
NGR: TF4885 7899
Site code: MPH 97
LCNCC Museum Accession No. 75.96

Investigatory Trenches

Report

for

Mr and Mrs Windsor

October 1997

SMR

**Lincolnshire County Council
Archaeology Section**

0 3. NOV 97

12 Friar Lane

LINCOLN LN2 5AL

Tel: 01522 575292 Fax: 01522 530724

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Summary

Excavation of trenches alongside existing east and south concrete foundations for a proposed garage east of Moat House revealed a partial profile of the north edge and bed of the infilled moat bounding the north side of the site of the medieval priory. The line of the north edge was so close to the alignment of that recorded in the foundation trenches of Moat House (within 0.50 metres), that the exact position of the north-east outer angle cannot be located with certainty. The 3 metre width of moat bed exposed in the section shows that it had a flat base.

Introduction

Planning permission for the erection of a detached garage to the east of Moat House (built in 1996) was granted on October 9th 1996, subject to a condition requiring an archaeological watching brief for the duration of the groundworks. The footing trenches were subsequently excavated but without the attendance of an archaeologist. As the concrete fill prevented archaeological examination, the owner was instructed to commission archaeological recording of investigatory trenches alongside the south and east footings on the condition, set by the building inspector, that the depth of the trenches should not exceed the depth of the existing concrete footings.

A previous report by Lindsey Archaeological Services: MPH96, June 1996, gave the findings of a Watching Brief on the foundation trenches for Moat House, commissioned by the owner-builder Mr. A. Windsor and conducted by L.A.S. in May, 1996. The monitoring and recording of the machine-excavated trenches (MT1 & MT2) was carried out by LAS on October 5th, 1997.

Archaeological Background

The parish of Markby lies near the coast in the Outmarsh zone of the Lincolnshire Marsh (Fig. 1). This area was subject to alternating periods marine transgression and regression which occurred at varying times, between throughout the Iron Age and into the post-Roman period in different parts of the Outmarsh; Roman and earlier deposits are buried beneath the marine silts of a later marine transgression which flooded the saltmarsh.

The distribution of Anglo-Saxon settlements on the eastern fringe of the Middlemarsh to the west suggests that the Outmarsh was still not permanently settled at this time, although it may have been suitable for seasonal grazing. Markby is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, indicating that the settlement was in existence by the late Saxon period but that it was sokeland

belonging to other estates. It is not known if there ever was a manorial complex in the village. The present settlement is shrunken, if not deserted, and the main focus of the village is the church which is situated within the Priory boundary.

The Augustinian Priory, founded by Ralph FitzGilbert in the 12th century is now only visible as earthworks under pasture and bounded by a partly-infilled moat (Fig. 2).

Description of Development Site

The site fronts onto Sutton Road immediately north of the existing north boundary to the site of Markby Priory. The garage is located east of Moat House and west of Priory House at the north-east corner of the priory moat (Pls. 1 and 2).

To the west of Moat House is a bungalow whose garden south boundary runs east-west along the top of the counter-scarp to the moat inner bank. The moat south scarp is visible as a gentle landscaped profile of the lawn south of the bungalow the south wall of which intrudes on the line of the moat's north edge (Pl. 3).

The south boundary to the Moat House property was a partly-infilled drainage ditch at the base of the moat inner bank in 1996 when the first watching brief was carried out (Clark 1996). At the time of writing (October 1997) the boundary has been extended south to align approximately to that of the west bungalow, and includes the top of the counter-scarp to the inner bank of the moat. The trees lining the top of the inner (south) bank have been partly removed to facilitate access via a stone-surfaced earth ramp; the raised beds of imported soil on either side reducing the gradient of the inner bank (Pls. 4 and 5). The buried duct in the infilled drainage ditch outflows eastward into the remainder of the open ditch at a point a few metres short of the east boundary.

The south boundary to Priory House to the east is (in 1997) unaltered, being the still-open drainage ditch (continuing east beyond the eastern return of the moat) which has a steep south scarp to the field east of the Priory site. Priory House stands immediately north-east of the (infilled) north-east angle of the moat.

Priory House to the east and the bungalow to the west were built in the 1970s, at which time all three plots were cleared of trees and rubble and roughly levelled; superfluous soil being used to partly fill the drainage ditch. The south wall of the Moat House (built June 1996 - March 1997) is positioned about one metre further south than that of the bungalow, i.e., intruding further (a total of c.3.50m) into the moat.

Priory House is positioned even further south by a few metres, but may be beyond the outer edge of the moat's north-east angle. According to Mr. Windsor

the foundations are very deep, but unless it overlaps the original outer angle of the moat or a continuation of the north moat or ancient stream, the reason is unknown. The south scarp of the open drainage ditch rises almost as high as, and could be taken for, an integral but interrupted part of, the moat inner bank.

According to local information, cottages once occupied the strip of land between the moat and Sutton Road, but in 1996 and 1997, other than occasional bricks and paviments (19th century?) in the re-deposited top layers there were no traces of footings or associated trenches. If these buildings had been positioned to the north, nearer the road, the firm clays beneath the top soil would have obviated the need for deep foundations.

Method

The first trench, MT1, maximum surface length 2.90m, was machine-excavated alongside the north side of the concrete footings to the proposed garage (Pl. 6). Horizontal layers of moat fill were revealed, almost identical to those found in the house footing trenches in 1996, and at similar depths. These were photographed but not drawn (Pl. 7). The second trench, MT2, maximum surface length 7m, was excavated alongside the west side of the concrete east footing, perpendicular to MT1 (Fig. 3). The exposed section was photographed and drawn (Pls. 8 and 9; Fig. 4). No samples were taken, as representative samples of peat and silt were retained in 1996. There were no finds.

Results

In 1996, only a short length of moat (or the lowest part of the original profile cut) was exposed in the southern footing trench for Moat House, and it was uncertain if this was the actual moat bed or just a step in the profile of the north scarp. MT2 section (Fig. 4) however, proves that the lowest level exposed is, in fact, the actual bed since it can be seen to extend as a flat profile for at least 3.50m southwards.

The progressive layers of fill are very similar to those previously recorded, although there are minor differences in depth and profile. The layers were assigned the same context numbers as those used in 1996 and are briefly described here.

1: Mixed clay, soil and bricks/brick fragments. Now disturbed and re-compacted by 1996 and 1997 groundworks (surface levels vary and differ from those taken in 1996 and was actually being machine-planed to a lower level during the recording.

1A: Mixed clay, soil and bricks/brick fragments as 1. 1970s levelling horizon. Compacted. Division between 1 and 1A much less distinct than in the 1996 section.

- 2: Mixed brown-light brown. Clay and soil mixed? Possibly deliberate spread after demolition or site clearance, infilling sunken profile of 3. Truncated by tree and surface clearance in the 1970s?
- 3: Dark-brown soil. Contained 19th-20th century cup handle (not retained). Contemporary with ?19th century buildings on site. Old garden soil.
- 4: Grey-brown mixed clay and silt up to c.500mm thick. Deliberate infill of moat prior to 18th-19th century building on site?
- 5: Layer of grey-green silt, similar to 7, - secondary silting of same material under same conditions.
- 6: Dark red-brown - black organic layer of wood, twigs, bark, leaves (also animal bones in 1996 section). Mostly wet. c.200mm thickness.
- 7: Primary fill of moat. Grey-green silt; wet, sticky with flecks of ?charcoal. Thickness c.80mm, increasing at north scarp.
- 8: Cut (into 9 & 10) for moat; at least 5.00m. of profile visible. Fades towards upper north.
- 9: (Not shown on section) overlying 10 with indistinct interface; cut by moat profile and later levelling.
- 10: buff-orange silty clay, compact; assumed flood deposit.

Conclusion

If the alignment of the moat bed is extended eastward from the location points recorded in the house foundation trenches of 1996, to the single point recorded in MT2 1997, the apparent displacement southwards (0.50m) is insufficient to prove that it is part of the outer angle of the southward return. Given the incomplete north edge of the moat, the short distance over which to establish the alignment, and the apparent veering south from the line of the road as shown on the 1:2500 OS map (Fig. 2) the precise position of an outer angle must remain conjectural. If the angle is abrupt, i.e., with no wide radius, then it lies within the boundaries of Priory House. If there are (as related by Mr Windsor) very deep footings to Priory House it would infer that the house, or part of it, overlies either the outermost edge of the moat's return angle, in which case the eastern moat was originally wider (to the east) than existing today or, an almost moat-width projection extended eastwards from this point.

Other than the existence of an ancient stream that fed and/or drained the moat, any continuation of the moat beyond the known area of the Priory would naturally have implications as to the historical status of the adjoining land to the east.

Acknowledgements

The writer would like to thank Mr A. Windsor and the machine operator Kevin for their full co-operation and assistance.

Michael V. Clark
October 1997.

Reference

Clark, M. V., 1996 *Land Adjacent to Priory House, Markby. Archaeological Watching Brief*. Unpublished LAS developer report .

Contents of Site Archive

1. 10 context sheets
2. 1 site plan (1:50) 1 section (1:20)
3. Site photographs and list
 Film No. 97/73 Negatives 12-23 inclusive (12 photos)
4. 3 drawings for report

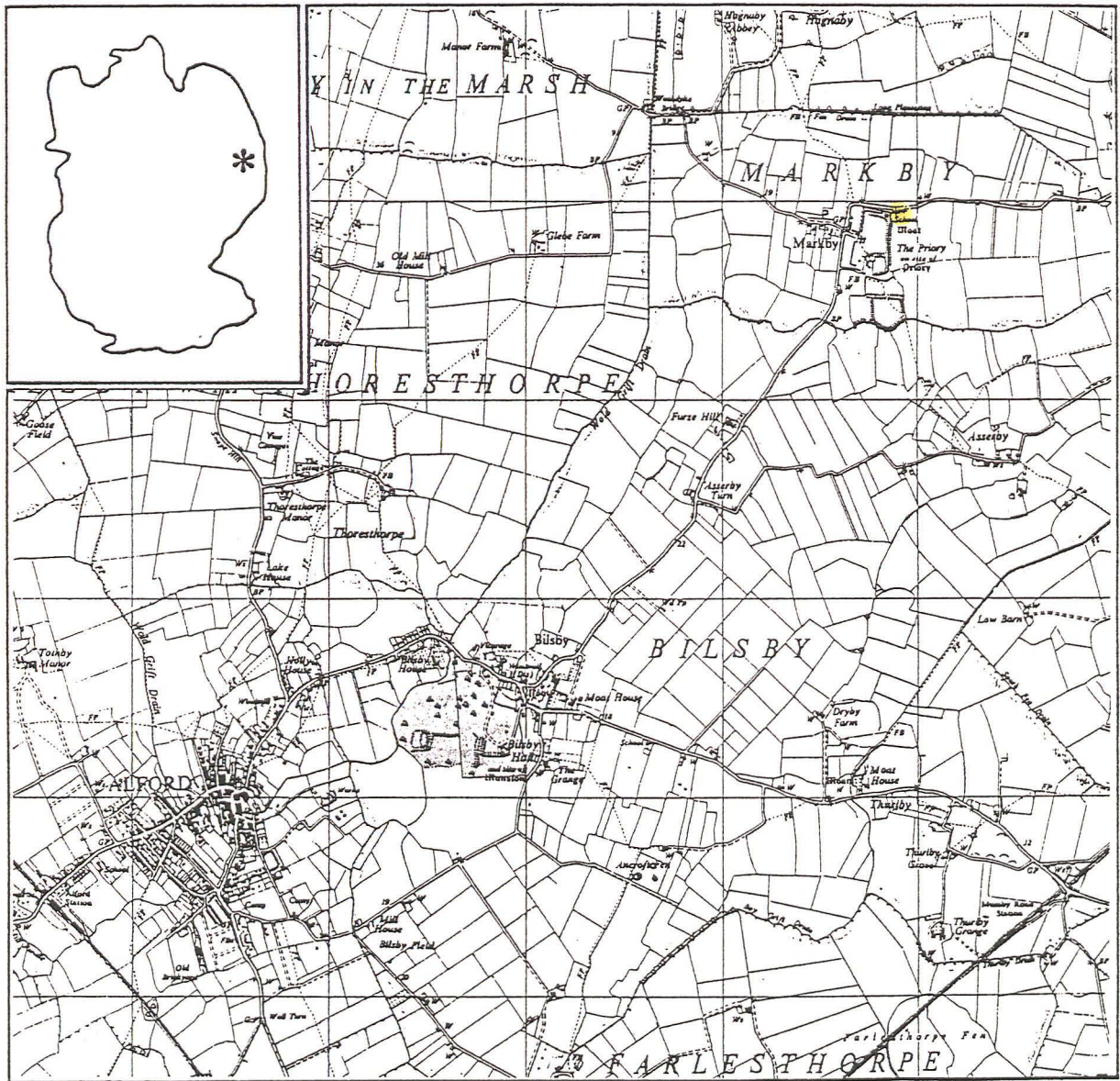
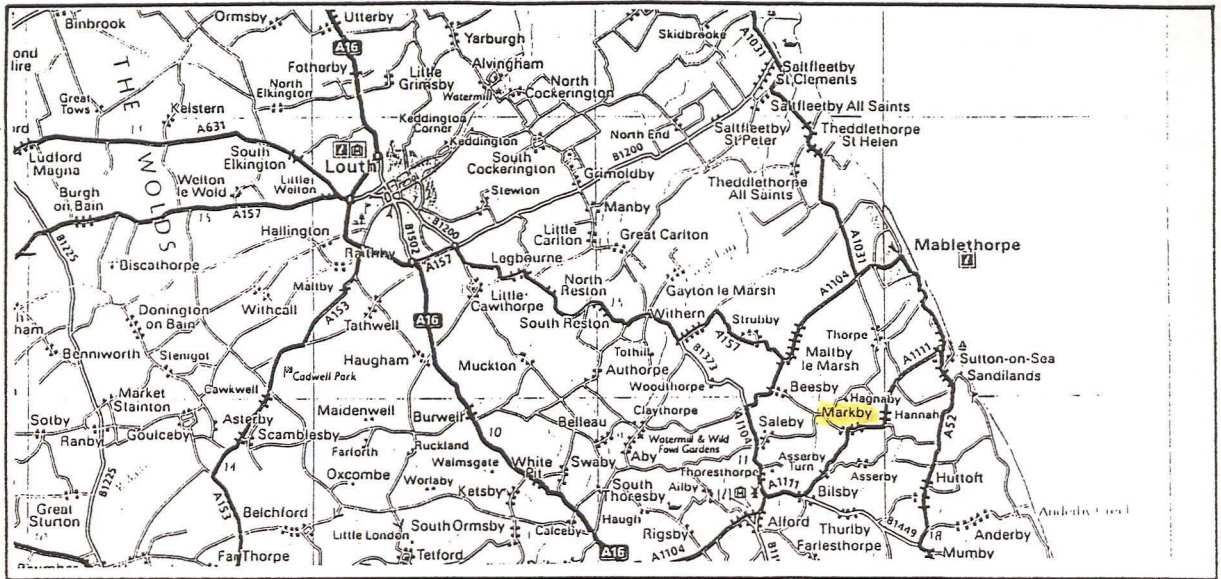


Fig. 1. Site location. Reproduced from the 1954 OS 1:25000 map with the permission of the Controller of HMSO, © Crown copyright. Licence no. AL50424.

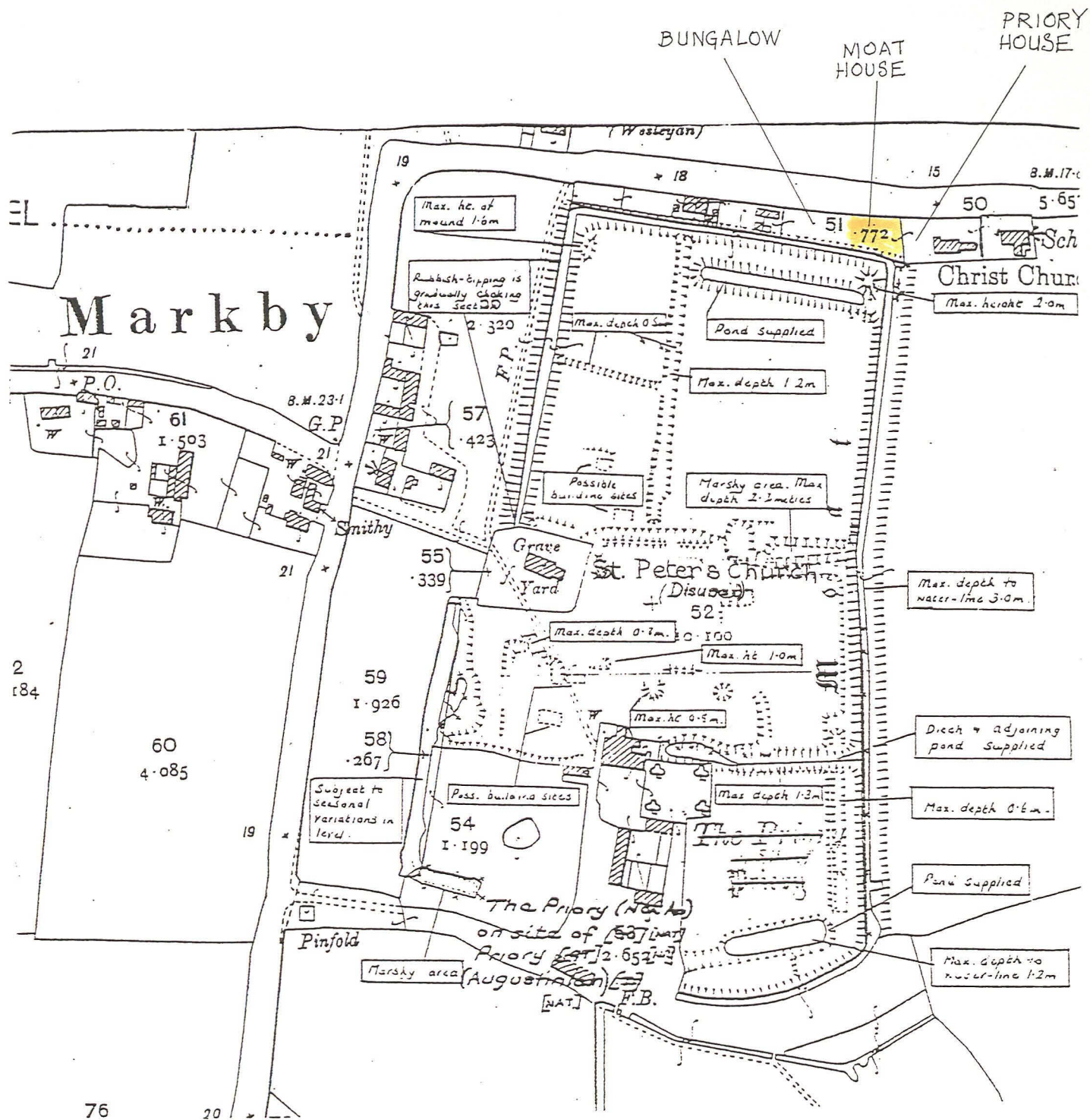


Fig. 2. 1:2500 scale survey of Markby Priory earthworks annotated in 1964 by Ordnance Survey investigator. Reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO, © Crown copyright. Licence no. AL50424.

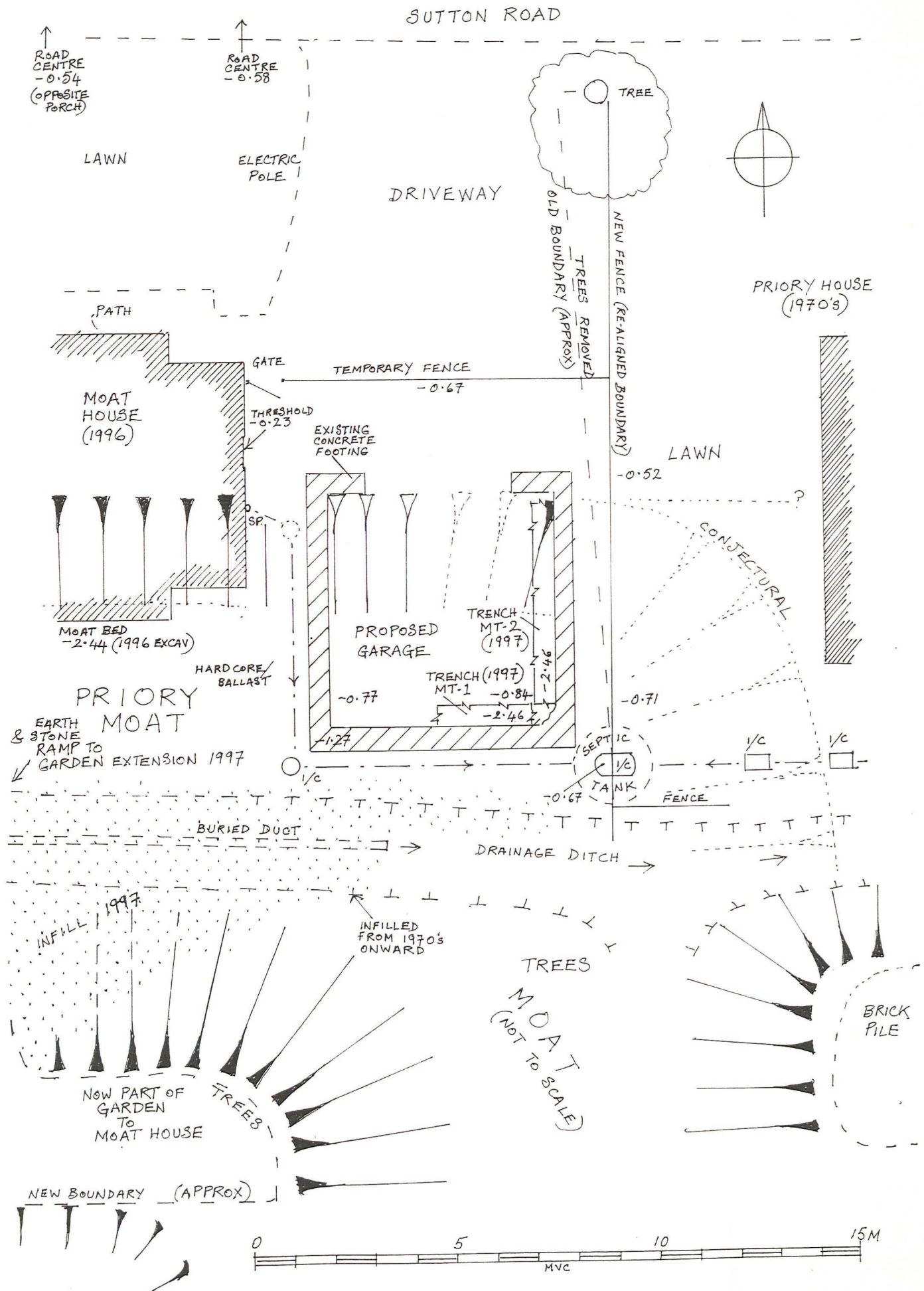


Fig. 3 Plan of Moat House property showing garage footings, machine trenches and conjectural north-east angle of medieval moat. (M. Clark)

Datum (0.67m above septic tank cover)

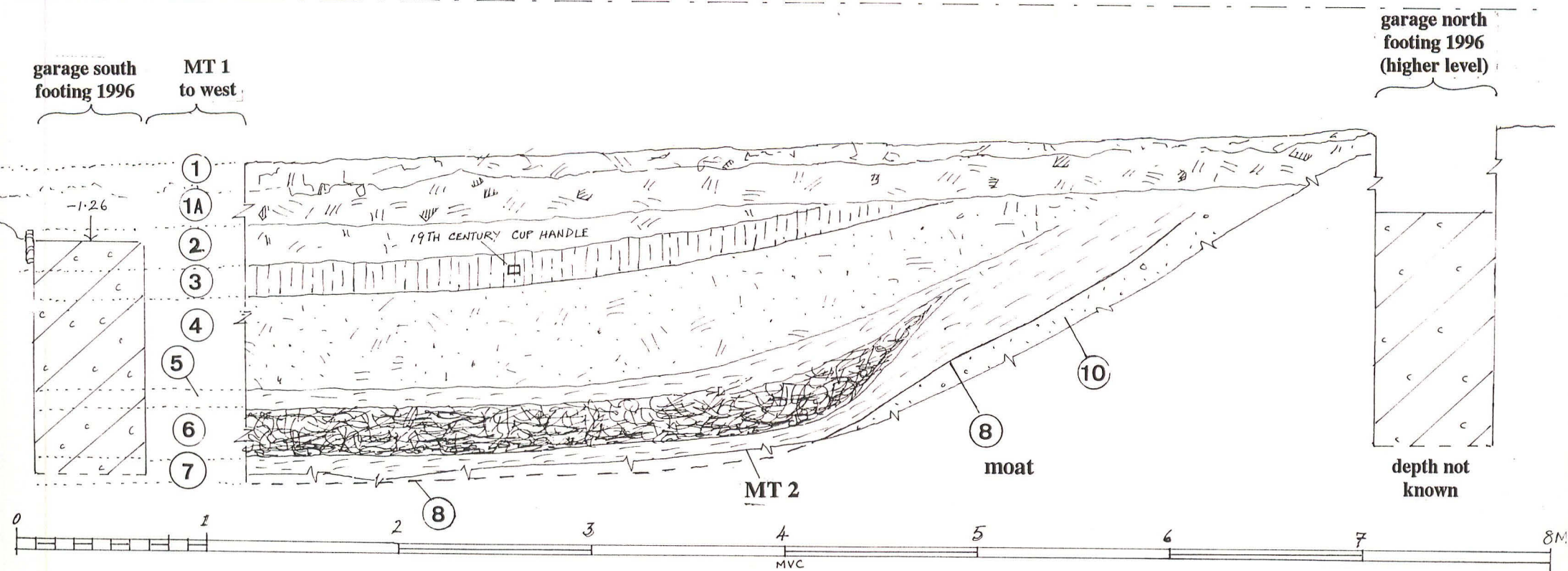


Fig. 4 Trench MT2. Section showing north part of moat profile. (M. Clark)

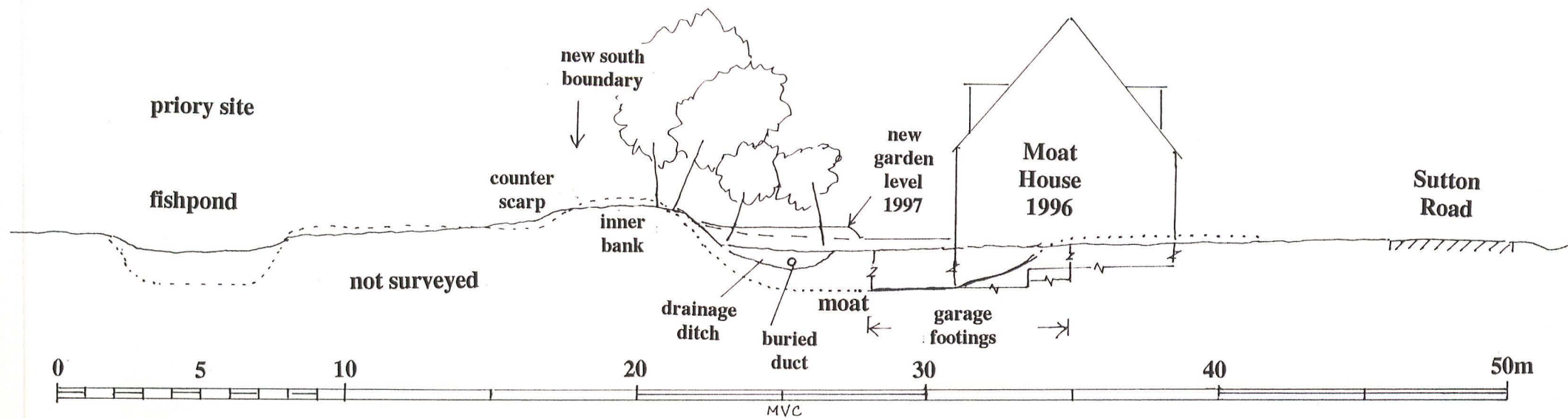


Fig. 5 Part schematic south-north profile and section across north boundary of priory site. (M. Clark)



Pl. 1 Moat House, Sutton Road (Priory House to left). Moat inner bank in background. New east fence. From north-west.

Pl. 2 Temporary fence to garage site. Moat inner bank approximately level with ground floor window glazing bar. From north.





Pl. 3 Bungalow to west of Moat House. Landscaped lawn over site of moat, rising to inner bank (left) From east.

Pl. 4 Moat House from inner bank. Access ramp between trees (right). Raised soil bed merging with inner grass bank. From south-west.





PI. 5 Raised soil beds with centre ramp to garden extension on moat inner bank. From north-west.

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