

**Victoria House, Elm Road  
Penn, Buckinghamshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Mr and Mrs Stewart**

by Andrew Weale

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code VHP 09/65

**July 2009**

## Summary

**Site name:** Victoria House, Elm Road, Penn, Buckinghamshire

**Grid reference:** SU 9063 9396

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 10th – 20th of July 2009

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Andrew Weale

**Site code:** VHP 09/65

**Area of site:** c. 625 sq m

**Summary of results:** An undated ditch with two possible re-cuts together with a construction trench for a brick and stone wall foundation were observed. The ditch and its recuts probably represent the line of the parish boundary

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

*This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder*

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 23.07.09
	Steve Preston ✓ 22.07.09

# Victoria House, Elm Road, Penn, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Weale

Report 09/65

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Victoria House, Elm Road, Penn, Buckinghamshire (SU 9063 9396) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Stewart of Victoria House, Elm Road, Penn, Buckinghamshire.

Planning permission has been granted from Chiltern District Council (CH/2008/1040/FA) for the demolition of an existing garage, and the construction of a replacement garage with room above. As a condition of the planning permission an archaeological watching brief was required to take place during ground works. The watching brief was continued into Wycombe District as the new building straddles both Council areas.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Eliza Alqassar, Archaeological Planning and Conservation Officer of Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (Alqassar 2009). The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale and Susan Colley between the 10th and 20th July 2009 and the site code is VHP 09/65.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the boundary of two parishes with the front part of the site within Penn and the rear in Chepping Wycombe. Penn is a village to the south of the larger village of Tyler's Green and lie to the east of High Wycombe. The site lies near the top of a ridge that slopes down to the south-west into the River Wye valley. The site lies at the junction between Elm Road which runs along the top of the ridge and Church Road to the south-west. (Fig. 2). The site is currently a mixture of concrete floor slabs and cobbled floors after the demolition of the previous garage with the remainder of the site occupied by the existing house and gardens. The site is bounded by Elm Road to the east, Church Road to the south and residential properties to the north and west and is at an elevation of 161.5m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is mapped as Head gravel

(gravel and sand) above Chalk (Seaford and Newhaven formations) (BGS 2005) with Head sand and gravels observed on site.

## **Archaeological background**

During the Medieval period Penn was an important production centre for decorated tile and is recorded in a 1332 Subsidy Roll. Production continued into the early post-medieval period (Green 2003; Taylor-Moore in prep; Alqassar 2009). The tiles were traded across southern England and have been documented for use in the Royal Palaces of Windsor, Westminster and the Tower of London as well as Waltham Abbey (Green 2003).

A post-medieval tile kiln together with a building constructed from tile has been excavated at Rose Cottage, 2 Elm Road, 50m to the south-east of the site (HER 06869). Medieval decorated floor tile of the Penn type together with pottery and roof tile wasters were recovered during the excavation. The Historical Environment Record also records 13th century pottery from Younder Cottage 90m to the north east (HER 92165), decorated 15th and 16th century floor tiles and wasters at Puttenham Place (HER 00164) and tile fragments from Pugh's Wood (HER 05449). It is thought that the tile industry was centred to the north of the site at Tyler's Green (Alqassar 2009). As such, development within the area of Penn and Tyler's Green has been subject to watching briefs and evaluations such as Cotters Barn, Elm Road (Anthony 2002); Old Reading Room Cottage, Church Road (Anthony 2003a); The Vicarage, Hammersley Lane, Tyler's Green (Anthony 2003b); Glenmore, Church Road (Anthony 2004); The Summit, Witheridge Lane (Hindmarch 2003); and Marigold Cottage, Beacon Hill (Pine and Oram 2005).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits which would be damaged or destroyed by the new ground works. Particular attention was to be paid to the recovery of evidence relating to the manufacture of pottery or tile in the medieval or post-medieval periods.

The foundation trenches in the part of the site within the Chiltern District Council area were excavated under archaeological supervision whilst the trenches within the Wycombe District Council area were excavated so that archaeological inspection could take place. The trenches were excavated by a tracked 360° mini-digger and where archaeology was encountered the trench and section were cleaned by hand. The main trenches were aligned NE–SW, with two cross trenches towards the back on a NW–SE alignment. The majority of the trenches were between 0.70 and 0.75m wide and between 1.0 to 2m deep. Spoil from the trench was deposited within a



skip and was monitored. The north-eastern 2m of the southern foundation trench was 0.50m wide and 0.70m deep. The brick and flint from the existing wall towards the front of the site was collected post-demolition for reuse in the new building and so no examples were kept.

## Results

The more northerly of the main NE–SW trenches was excavated through heavily disturbed ground including what appeared to be the soakaway for the demolished garage. The trench was 4.80m long and 0.75m wide. The stratigraphy within this trench comprised 0.10m of topsoil, over 0.20m of subsoil (a grey/brown silty sand), over 0.60m of made ground (a dark silty sand with modern brick). The foundation trench cut through a disused soakaway which was 2.0m in length and up to 2.0m in depth. The soakaway was filled with a dark brown silty sand with very frequent large flint and modern brick. The soakaway cut clean sand and gravel. No pre-modern artefacts or features were observed within this trench.

The southern trench was excavated along the southern edge of the site alongside Church Road. The trench was 13m long and 0.70m wide. The stratigraphy within this trench was between 0.40 and 0.45m of a dark brown humic silty sand with modern brick concrete and occasional plastic and wood. Beneath this deposit were four cut features.

Foundation 1 was vertical sided and flat bottomed, 0.89m wide, 0.48m deep and over 0.70m long which crossed the trench south east to north west (**Plate 1**). Within Foundation 1 was wall 51 which was made up of a brick foundation of two courses of header on stretcher with one course of stretcher above. Above the brick foundation was 0.07m of a hard pale yellow sandy mortar and a large block of sandstone 0.41m long and 0.21m thick. Wall 51 did not cross the trench and the remains in section appeared to be the butt end of a wall which would extend underneath Church Road to the south east. Foundation 1 was back-filled with deposit (53) a light brown silty sand with occasional brick and tile fragments but unlike the wall, it crossed the trench into the south-east facing section.

Ditch 2 was vertical sided and flat bottomed and was 0.67m wide, 0.56m deep and crossed the trench. Ditch 2 was filled with mixed firm dark grey humic silty sand and pale yellow grey silty sand (54) which contained an oyster shell. Ditch 2 cut Ditch 3.

Ditch 4 was vertical sided and the base sloped down from north-east to south-west. It was 0.64m wide 0.77m deep and crossed the trench (**Plate 2**). Ditch 4 was filled with (56) a loose grey brown silty clay with occasional fragments of tile and very occasional flecks of charcoal. Ditch 4 also cut ditch 3.

Ditch 3 was 2.69m wide 0.66m deep, with sloping sides. The base of ditch 3 was cut away by ditch 4. Ditch 4 was filled with deposit 55, a firm yellow/brown silty sand. No artefacts were recovered from deposit (55).

Beneath ditch 3 was pale grey yellow banded sand and gravel sheet head deposits with clean yellow head deposits at 0.97m deep.

The remaining trenches within the Wycombe District Council area revealed stratigraphy which comprised topsoil 0.10m thick, over subsoil 0.20m thick and up to 0.65m pale grey yellow banded sand and gravel sheet head deposits with clean yellow head deposits at 0.95m deep. No archaeological features or deposits were observed within these trenches.

## **Finds**

### *Brick and tile by Andrew Weale*

One piece of brick weighing 700g was recovered from deposit 53 in ditch 1. It had a breadth of 108mm and a height of 65mm. No complete length measurement could be taken. The fabric was a brown/red with large rounded flint gravel inclusions. There appeared to be the start of a frog on one side and up to 12mm of a pale yellow sandy mortar adhering to the opposite side. The breadth and height are very similar to the bricks within wall 51. The presence of the frog suggests a post-medieval date.

Two fragments of undecorated tile weighing 144g were recovered from deposit 56 in ditch 4. The only measurable dimension was a thickness of 14mm to both fragments. The tile fragments could date from the Medieval period to the present.

### *Oyster Shell by Andrew Weale*

One piece of oyster shell weighing 16g was recovered from deposit 54 in Ditch 2.

## **Conclusion**

No evidence for the production of brick or tile was encountered within the footing trenches of the new garage. Ditch 3 appears to follow the line of the parish boundary between Penn and Chepping Wycombe. This ditch may have been recut twice as ditches 2 and 4 to form property boundaries. However the current property boundary is unchanged since the First Edition of the Ordnance Survey of 1884. No modern finds were recovered from any of the fills of ditches 2, 3 and 4 so this may suggest that this boundary went out of use before

the late 19th century. Ditch3 was not present up in the northern trench, but this may be due to the presence of the modern soak away and made ground associated with the construction of the demolished garage.

The foundation trench 1 appeared to extend into the site, however wall (51) appeared to end at the boundary of the site and continue under Church Road as a free standing type of wall construction. This may suggest that a building had existed along Elm Road which was demolished for the construction of Church Road, or simply a free-standing wall reinforcing the ditched boundary.

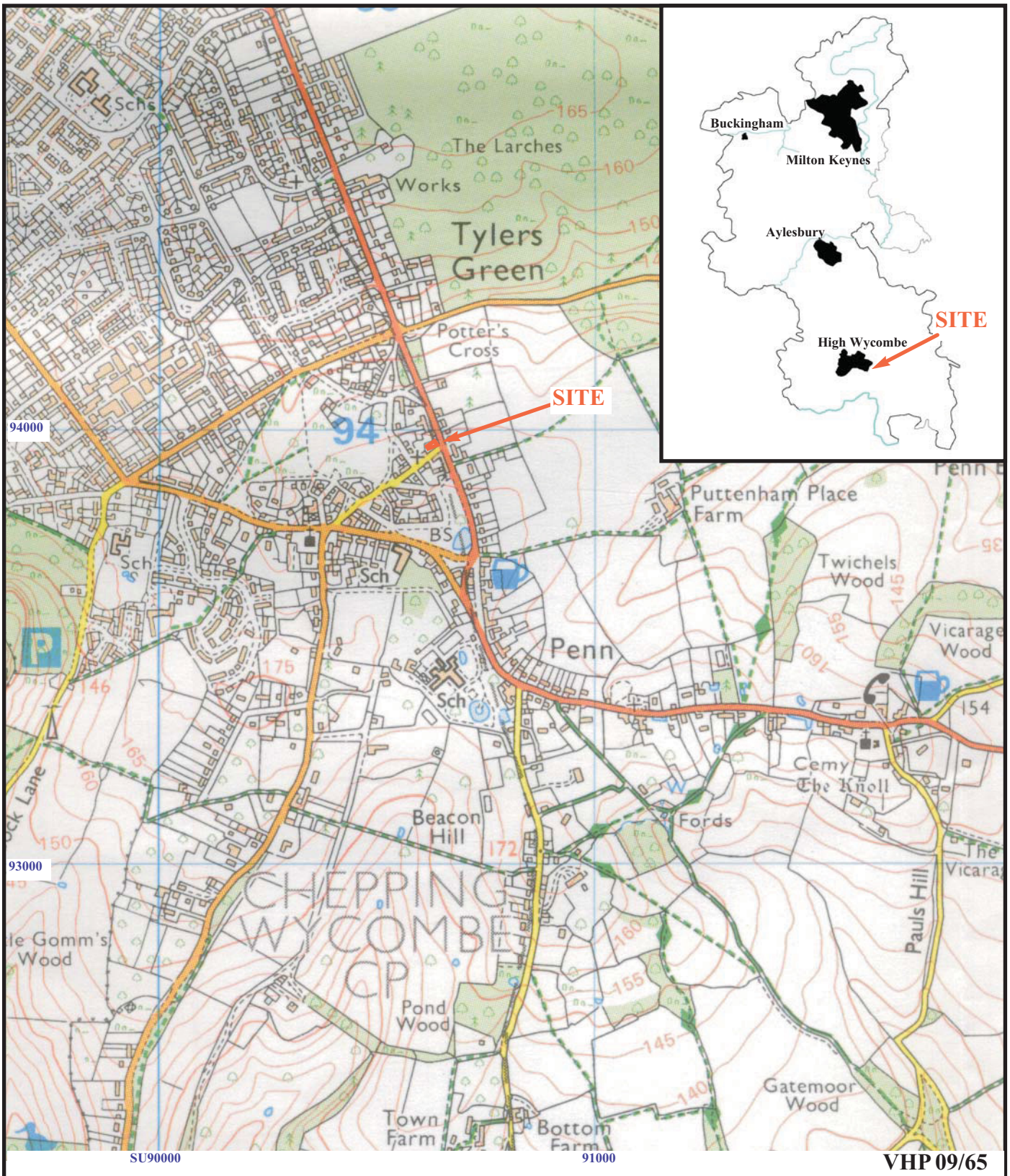
## References

- Alqassar, E, 2009, 'Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service Generic Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief', Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service, Aylesbury
- Anthony, S, 2002, 'Cotters Barn, Elm Road, Penn, Buckinghamshire, an archaeological watching brief@', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 02/19, Reading
- Anthony, S, 2003a, 'Old Reading Room Cottage, Church Road, Penn, Buckinghamshire, an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 03/35, Reading
- Anthony, S, 2003b, 'The Vicarage, Hammersley Lane, Tyler's Green, Buckinghamshire, an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 03/106, Reading
- Anthony, S, 2004, 'Glenmore, Church Road, Penn, Buckinghamshire, an archaeological evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 04/104, Reading
- BGS, 2005, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 255, Solid and Draft Edition, Keyworth
- Green, M, 2003, 'Penn Tiles' (unpublished)
- Hindmarch, E, 2003, 'The Summit, Witheridge Lane, Penn, Buckinghamshire, an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 03/12, Reading
- Pine, J and Oram, R, 2005, 'Marigold Cottage, Beacon Hill, Penn, Buckinghamshire, an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 04/121, Reading
- PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
- Taylor-Moore, C, in prep, 'Medieval Buckinghamshire AD1066-1540, Research Assessment', Solent Thames Research Agenda (draft)

**APPENDIX 1: Feature details**

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	51, 53	Wall brick and stone	Post-medieval	Brick
2	54	Ditch	undated	none
3	55	Ditch	undated	none
4	56	Ditch	Medieval to present	Tile





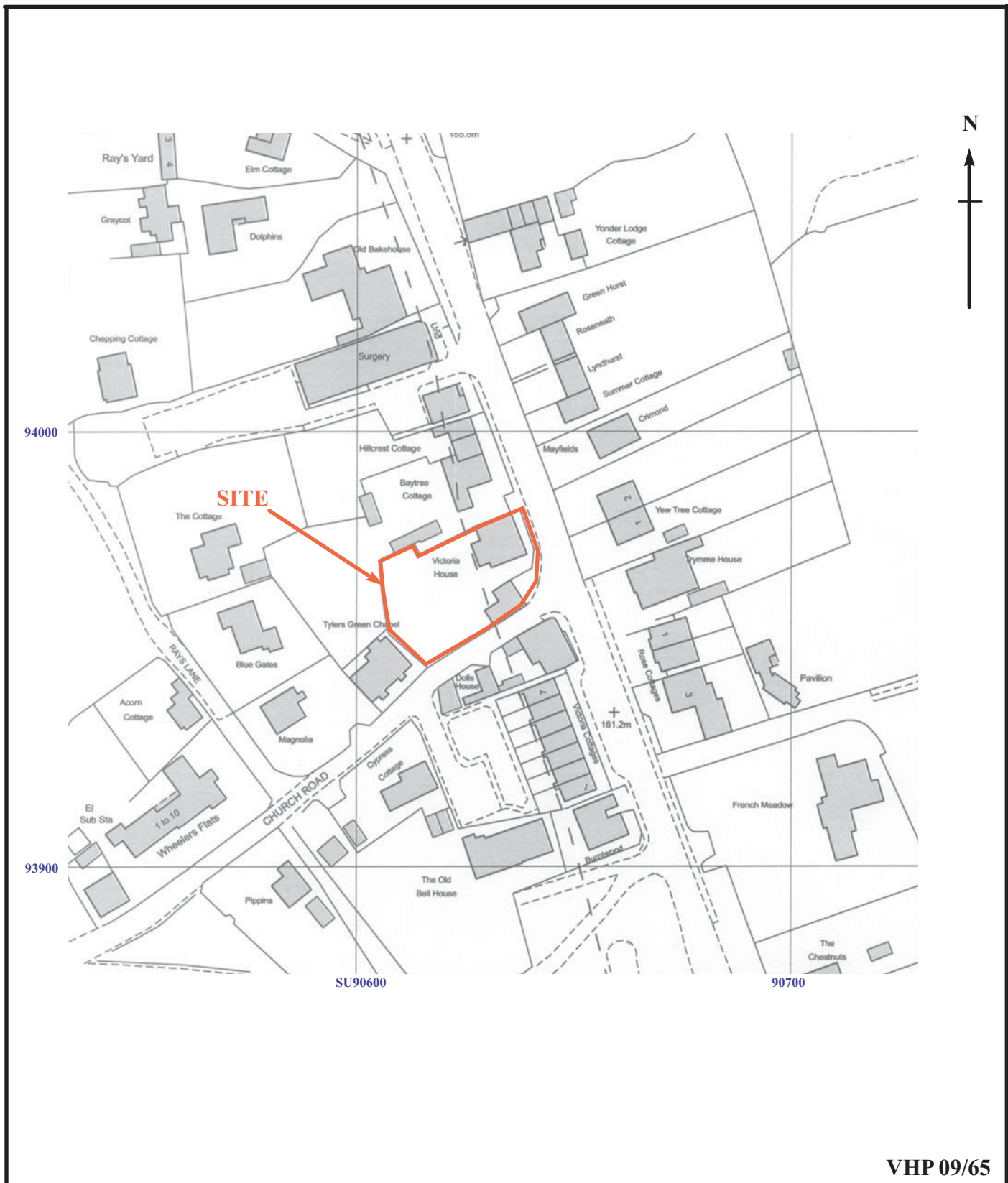
**Victoria House, Elm Road, Penn,  
Buckinghamshire, 2009  
Archaeological watching brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within Penn and Buckinghamshire.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Explorer 172 at 1:12500.  
Ordnance Survey Licence 100025880

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES





VHP 09/65

**Victoria House, Elm Road, Penn,  
Buckinghamshire, 2009  
Archaeological watching brief**

Figure 2. Location of site off Elm Road.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital mapping under licence.  
Crown copyright reserved. Scale: 1:1250

THAMES VALLEY  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES

# Victoria House, Elm Road, Penn, Buckinghamshire, 2009



Figure 3. Location of groundworks observed during watching brief.

# Victoria House, Elm Road, Penn, Buckinghamshire, 2009

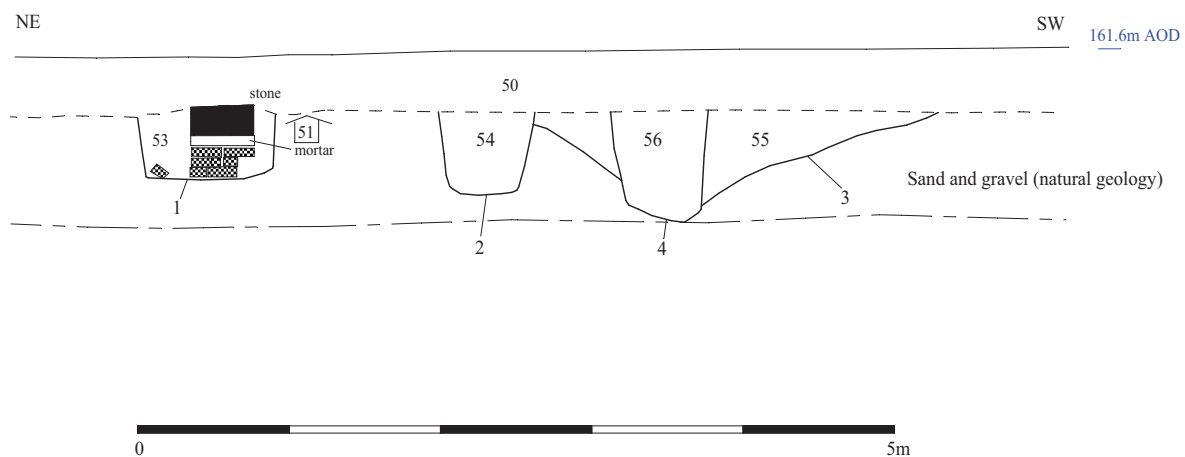


Figure 4. Footing section.





Plate 1. Wall 51 in cut 1, looking south-east, scales, horizontal 2m, vertical 1m.



Plate 2. Cuts 3 and 4, looking south-east, scales, horizontal 2m, vertical 1m.