

**97 HEMP LANE
WIGGINTON
HERTFORDSHIRE**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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Introduction

Planning permission (4/02477/08) has been granted to the client for a two-storey extension to 97 Hemp Lane, Wigginton, near Tring in Hertfordshire. As the development area lies within Area of Archaeological Significance 9 (in the (Dacorum Borough Council Local Plan 2004), a condition was attached to the planning permission that required an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken during the excavation of the foundation trenches. Albion Archaeology was commissioned to undertake the watching brief and produce a report on the results.

Fieldwork and report production were undertaken by Christiane Meckseper (Project Officer). The report was checked by Joe Abrams (Project Manager) and approved by Drew Shotliff (Operations Manager). The figures were produced by Joan Lightning (CAD Technician).

A copy of this report and the project archive will be sent to the Dacorum Heritage Trust Museum (Accession Number DACHT: 2714).

Site Description and Location (Figure 1)

The development area is situated in the centre of Wigginton to the south of Hemp Lane and is centred on grid reference SP 9406 1024. It lies on the Chilterns escarpment at a height of *c.* 205m OD. The proposed extension projects *c.* 3.5m from the eastern side of the existing house and covers an area of *c.* 10.5sq m.

Archaeological Background

The site lies within Area of Archaeological Significance No.9, as described in the Local Plan. This notes that Wigginton is a medieval village recorded in the Domesday Book as 'Wigentone'. The parish church of St Bartholomew, dating from the 15th century, lies *c.* 70m to the north of the site.

In the absence of significant archaeological work within the village itself, little is known about its archaeological potential. An archaeological recording programme was undertaken on land at New Ground on Hemp Lane in 2000 (Hunn). Due to the shallowness of the development no evidence was recovered of pre-modern occupation on the site. There is also some indication of Roman occupation (a possible building) 200m to the SSW of the site.

Project Methodology

Methods employed during the project complied with the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct and Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (1999), English Heritage's *Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991), and Albion Archaeology's *Procedures Manual* (2001).

Description and Results of Groundworks (Figures 2 and 3)



The foundation trench was excavated adjacent to the main house of 97 Hemp Lane using a mini-excavator with a toothed bucket. The trench measured 0.80m in depth, 0.80m in width and marked out a rectangular area 3.60m by 3.70m in size.

A sewage pipe and its construction cut were situated immediately adjacent to the eastern wall of 97 Hemp Lane. The pipe was recorded in the base of the foundation trench and its construction cut was up to 1.40m wide. It had destroyed all potential archaeological deposits immediately to the east of the current building.

A deposit of mid greenish grey clay (100) with frequent flint fragments, occasional charcoal flecks and brick/tile fragments was recorded to the east of the sewage pipe in the base of the trench. It extended throughout all sections of the foundation trench and its depth could not be ascertained. The deposit most likely represents a levelling or make up layer, possibly to accommodate the structure represented by wall (102).

Wall (102) on a north-south alignment was recorded in the northern arm of the foundation trench. It was cut into the clay layer (100). The wall measured 0.32m in width and has survived to a height of 0.20m. It was recorded at 0.72m below present ground level. The wall extended throughout the 0.80m width of the trench, but it did not extend into the southern or eastern arm of the foundation trench.

The wall consisted of a lower layer of rough flint pebbles and brick fragments in a matrix of creamy white lime mortar. This was below one course of dark red bricks that only survived in section. The wall probably represents a foundation for a small structure. Its form and function have not been clarified within the confines of this watching brief. The bricks used to construct the wall are post-medieval to modern in date.

A bright orange plastic clay layer (103) that extended throughout the foundation trench and measured circa 0.20m in thickness was above the wall. The clay may represent further levelling of the area after the structure represented by wall (102) was demolished.

A thick layer of loose to friable dark brown sandy clay (104) with frequent inclusions of flint pebbles, brick fragments, charcoal and coal flecks and metal debris was above the orange clay. It measured 0.10-0.40m in thickness with an increase in depth from west to east. The layer most likely filled an existing depression in the ground to the east of the house. It represents a mixture of waste and demolition material.

A thin layer of modern topsoil and grass (105) covered the deposits.

Conclusion

The watching brief at 97 Hemp Lane revealed evidence for post-medieval to modern human activity that may either pre-date the construction of the current building in 1902 or be contemporary with its early history. The clay make-up layer in the base of the foundation trench and the small wall foundation are likely to pre-date the building. However, the shape and form of the bricks did not suggest a date earlier than the 19th century. The overall form and function of the structure are unclear.



The orange clay layer above the wall may have been laid down to prepare the area for the building of 97 Hemp Lane in 1902. The clay layer and the dark deposit with brick and metal debris could also have been the result of subsequent digging and dumping of waste east of the house and contemporary with its early occupation. The insertion of a modern sewage pipe has destroyed the relationship of all archaeological deposits with the current building and thus their precise sequence could not be established.

Bibliography

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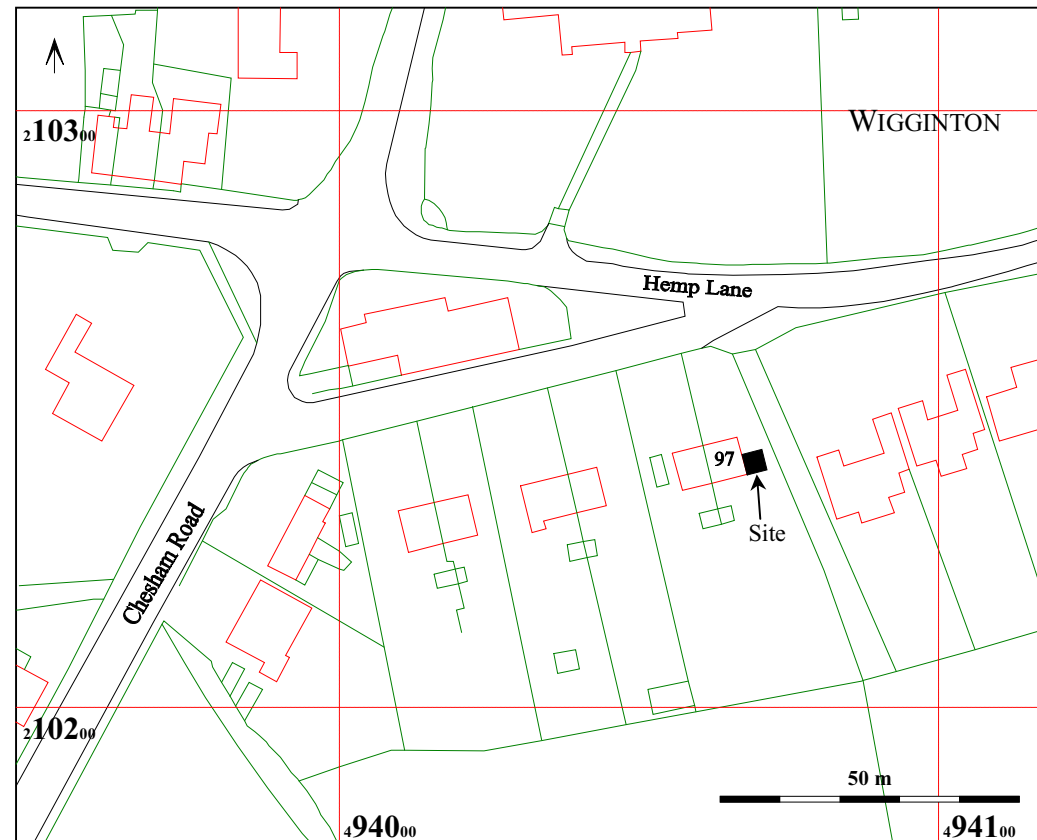
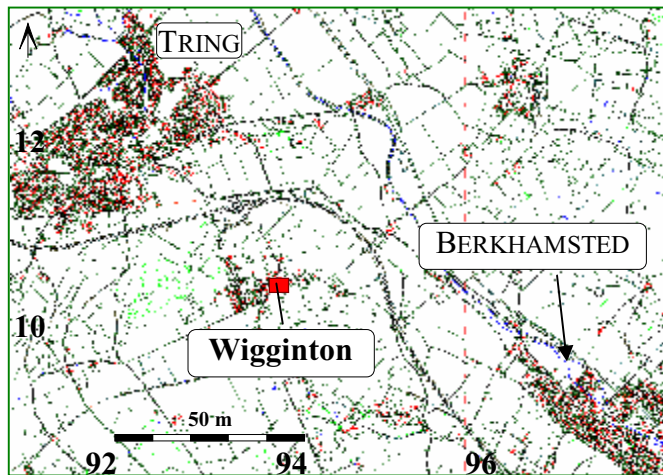
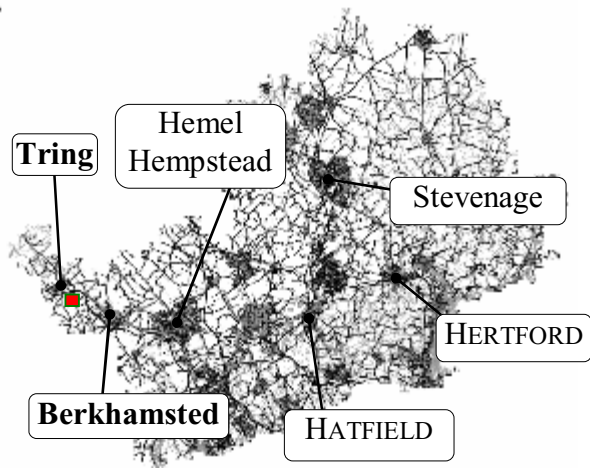


Figure 1: Site location map

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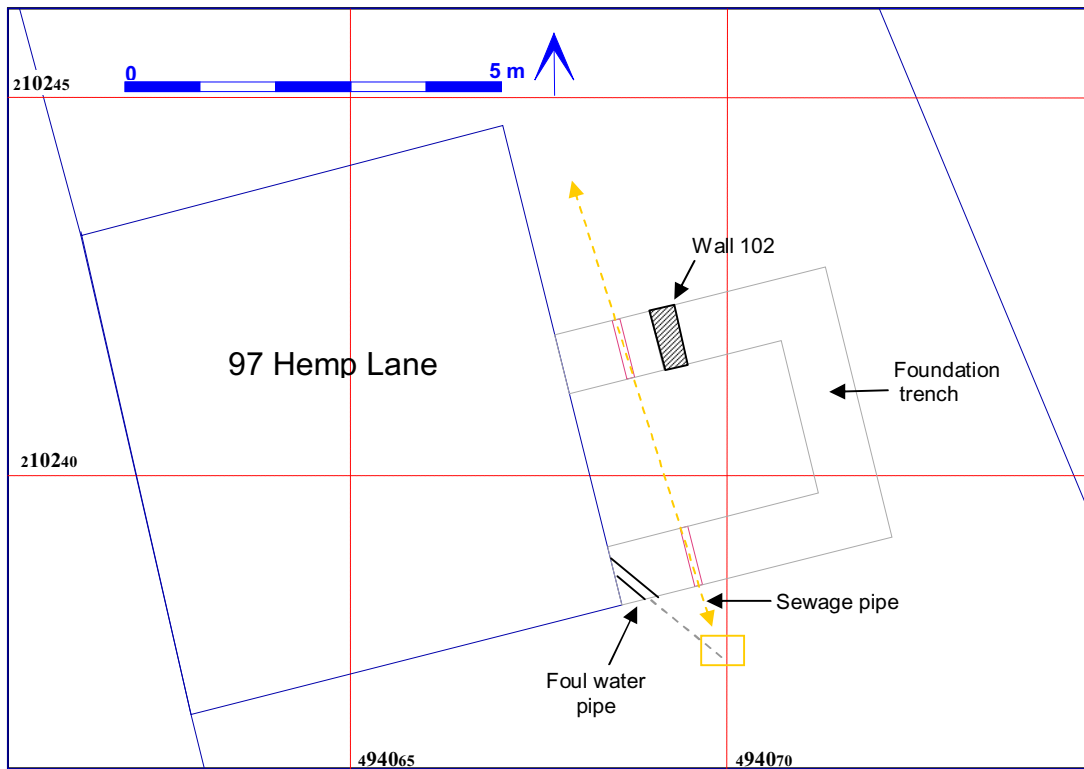


Figure 2: Archaeological features uncovered in foundation trench



Figure 3: Sewage pipe and small wall (102)