

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:
VER LODGE
9 PONDWICKS CLOSE
ST ALBANS
(INTERIM REPORT)**

NGR: TL 1439 0678

on behalf of Mr and Mrs C. Meadows



Martin Cuthbert BA (Hons)

May 2009

ASC: 1185/SPC/2a



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Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	SPC/2a	<i>Project no:</i>	1185
<i>OASIS ref:</i>	Archaeol2-59005	<i>Event/Accession no:</i>	SPC09
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	St. Albans		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	St. Albans		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	TL 1439 0678		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	c.250 sq m (area of existing house and new build)		
<i>Present land use:</i>	House and garden		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of new pool house and conservatory		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	5/07/0382		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	St. Albans District Council		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	May 2009		
<i>Client:</i>	Mr Chris Meadows Ver Lodge 9 Pondwicks Close St Albans AL1 1DG		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Mr Chris Meadows		

Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Martin Cuthbert	<i>Date:</i>	19 th May 2009
<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>	Bob Zeepvat	<i>Date:</i>	19 th May 2009

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Figure 1: General location (Scale 1:25,000)

Summary

In May 2009 a watching brief was carried out by Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) during the groundworks for an extension to a garage at Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close, St Albans. No deposits or finds of archaeological significance were revealed. However, as the ground works were limited in scope this does not preclude the presence of archaeological remains elsewhere on the site.

1. Introduction

1.1 In May 2009 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief at Ver Lodge, Pondwicks Close, St. Albans, Hertfordshire. The project was commissioned by *Mr and Mrs C Meadows*, and was defined in a project design prepared by ASC (Fell 2009), following discussions with the District Archaeological Officer (DAO), advisor to the local planning authority (LPA), *St. Albans District Council*. The relevant planning application reference is 5/07/0382.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This watching brief was required under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16), as a condition of planning permission for the development of the site.

1.3 *Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd*

Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd (ASC) is an independent archaeological practice providing a full range of archaeological services including consultancy, field evaluation, mitigation and post-excavation studies, historic building recording and analysis. ASC is recognised as a *Registered Archaeological Organisation* by the Institute of Field Archaeologists, in recognition of its high standards and working practices.

1.4 *Management*

The project was managed by Karin Semmelmann BA MA MIFA, and was carried out under the overall direction of Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

1.5 *The Site*

1.5.1 *Location & Description*

The site is situated in the city of St Albans, Hertfordshire (Figure 1). It lies to the south of the city centre, at the west end of Pondwicks Close and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference TL 1439 0678 (Figure 2). Ver Lodge is situated at the north end of the plot, which covers a total area of c.0.6 ha. comprising lawn and mature trees. Access is from the east, from Pondwicks Close. The natural drainage of the area is dominated by the river Ver, which forms the southern boundary of the site and which flows from west to east. The land slopes down towards the river and the site has an average elevation of c.80m OD.

1.5.2 *Geology & Topography*

The natural soils of the site comprise the *Charity Association*, namely well drained flinty fine silty soils over chalky drift (Soil Survey 1983, 571m). The underlying geology comprises alluvial deposits of the river Ver, over Upper Chalk (BGS, Sheet 239).

1.5.3 *Proposed Development*

The development proposal comprised the construction of a new pool house, conservatory and extension to the existing garage (Figure 3). This report deals with the first phase of works, comprising the garage extension.

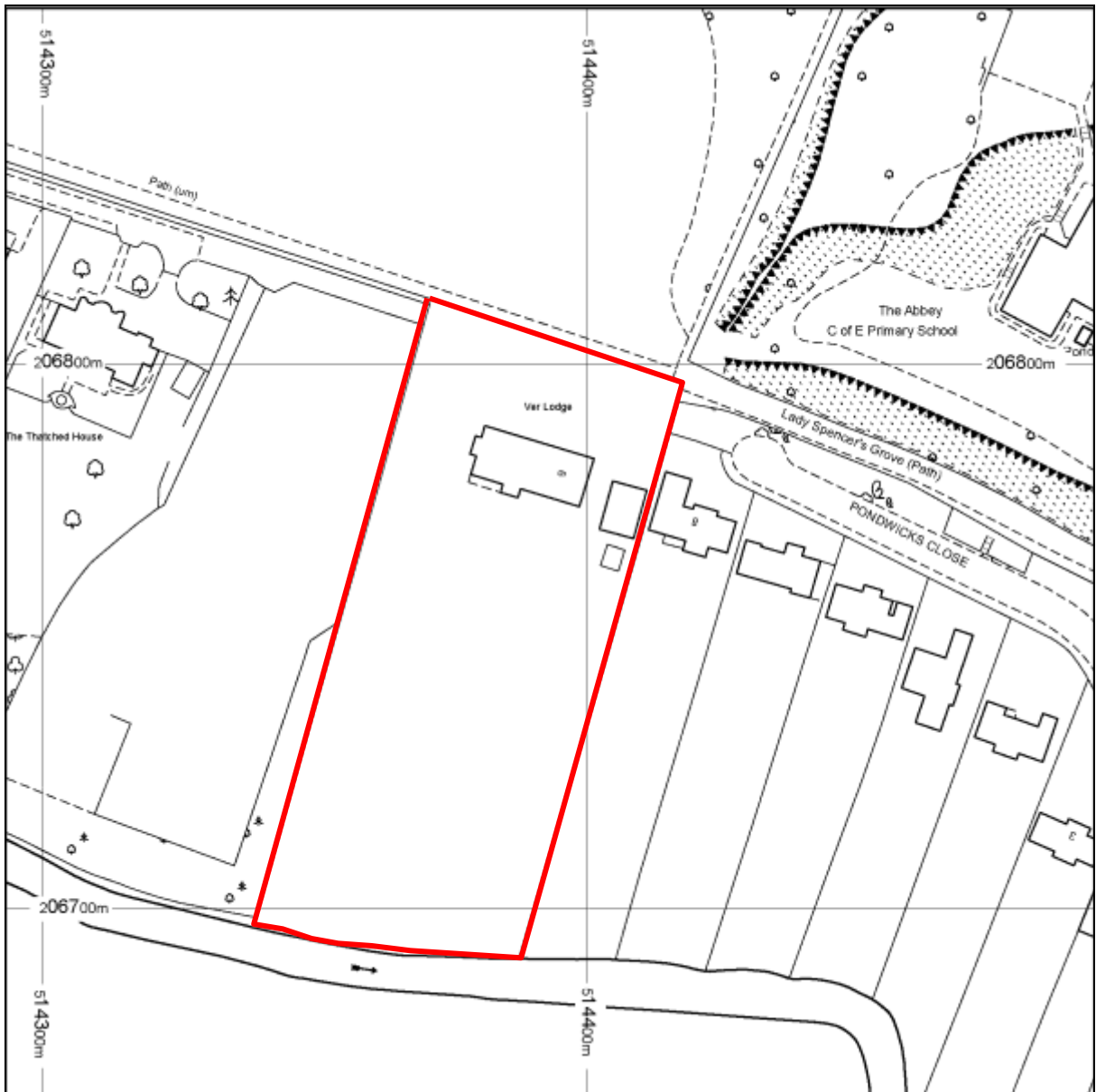


Figure 2: Site plan (Scale 1:1,250)

2. Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

In line with the requirements of the DAO, the aims of the project were:

- To ensure the archaeological monitoring of all aspects of the development programme likely to affect archaeological remains
- To secure the adequate recording of any archaeological remains revealed by the development programme
- To secure the analysis, conservation, and long-term storage of any artefactual/ecofactual material recovered from the site

2.2 Standards

The work conformed to the requirements of the DAO, to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 Methods

In line with the requirements of the DAO, the methods adopted for this project were:

- Soil and overburden stripping under archaeological supervision
- Inspection of sub-soil deposits for archaeological features
- The rapid investigation and recording of any archaeological features/deposits
- Sub-soil stripping under archaeological supervision
- Examination of any service and foundation trenches and the subsequent recording of any exposed archaeological deposits
- Rapid examination of spoil-heaps for archaeological material
- A programme of post-fieldwork analysis, archiving and publication

2.4 Constraints

No constraints were identified prior to the watching brief fieldwork and none were encountered during the monitoring visits.

3. Archaeological & Historical Background

3.1 Introduction

St Albans is an area of considerable archaeological and historical importance (*e.g.* Niblett and Thompson 2005; Niblett 2001) and much of the city centre has been designated by the local authority as an *Area of Archaeological Significance* (no.18). Remains of the Iron Age, Roman, Saxon and medieval periods have been identified and the area is considered to be of national importance.

3.2 Prehistoric (before 43AD)

A range of flint artefacts have been found in the valley of the river Ver in the St Albans area. The area was of considerable importance during the late Iron Age and a number of major sites of this period are located there. Late Iron Age settlement was dominated by a settlement at Prae Wood *c.*2km west of the site (Wheeler & Wheeler 1936). Settlement of this period has been found at several locations in this area, for example at Gorhambury (Neal *et al.*, 1990). Further evidence of this period has been found north of the river, notably at Folly Lane, where an important Late Iron Age high status burial has been recorded (Niblett 1999).

The nature and extent of prehistoric remains in the immediate vicinity of the development site is not understood in detail, but late Iron Age features and artefacts were recorded northeast of the site, prior to the construction of the Abbey Primary School. An irregular shaped enclosure, which may also be of this period, has been identified through aerial photography to the west of the school (Saunders & Havercroft 1976, 16 & fig. 6).

3.3 Roman (AD43-c.450)

Following the Roman conquest there was a shift in settlement, and an important Roman city, known as *Verulamium*, was laid out on the south side of the river Ver. It developed into the third largest city in Roman Britain and is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Niblett 2001; Wheeler & Wheeler 1936). The development site is located *c.*0.5km to the east of the Roman city. Communications in the area were dominated by a major Roman road, now known as *Watling Street*, which lead from *Londinium* (London) to the south gate of the Roman city.

The early phase of buildings in the town was constructed of timber, and many were destroyed during the Boudiccan Revolt in AD 60-61 (Frere 1972). The town was subsequently rebuilt and expanded, and was later encircled by gated walls (Niblett 2001). St Alban, the first British Christian martyr, was executed in AD 209 within the city walls (Niblett 2001, 137-139).

A number of cemeteries are recorded outside the city walls notably on King Harry Lane to the south west of the city (Stead & Rigby 1989). Further burials are recorded on the east side of the city, *c.*400-500m southeast of the development site (Anthony 1968, 9-50).

Verulamium began to decline after the departure of the Roman Army with many of its buildings falling into disuse and by the 5th century much of the population had relocated (Niblett 2001, 127-146).

3.4 *Saxon (c.450-1066)*

The focus of the settlement shifted to the north side of the river during the Saxon period, where a new site known as Kingsbury developed (Niblett 2001, Fig. 75). King Offa of Mercia founded an Abbey dedicated to the martyred Christian St Alban and the present cathedral, which lies c.500m north of the development site, occupies the site of the Saxon abbey. A market was established in the town during the 10th century.

3.5 *Medieval (1066-1500)*

St Albans is mentioned in the Domesday Survey (1086) when the abbot was the principal landholder (Williams & Martin 2002, 377). The town developed considerably during the medieval period, when settlement became focused around the abbey and its precinct.

The development site is situated immediately to the south of the abbey precinct and remains of the precinct wall were recorded to the west of Ver Lodge in 1975 (Saunders & Havercroft 1975, 16-18).

3.6 *Post-Medieval and modern (after 1500)*

Antiquarian maps of the area (eg Hare 1634; Godman 1822) shows the area of the site as open land. Hare's map shows the area divided into two separate plots, named *Pond Wicks* and *Abbey Meads*. The north side of these plots approximately coincide with the south wall of the abbey precinct.

The first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 scale map was published in 1880 and shows a track named *Lady Spencer's Grove*, following the approximate line of Pondwicks Close. The 1899 and 1925 edition six inch to the mile maps show the area as undeveloped, and Pondwicks Close and the buildings to the west were constructed during the mid 20th century.

4. Results

- 4.1 Observations were made during excavation of the two lengths of foundation trench for an extension to an existing garage (Figure 4, Plate 2 & 3).
- 4.2 The eastern trench was approximately 0.7m wide and *c* 1.0m deep. Below the surface of the modern drive, which comprised 0.1m depth of tarmac and aggregate, was 0.3m of dark brown silty topsoil overlying 0.6m of mid brown silty clay subsoil with frequent gravel inclusions. Below this was undisturbed natural mid brown-yellow sharp sand with frequent gravel inclusions (Plates 2 & 3).
- 4.3 The western trench was 0.55m wide and *c*. 1.0m deep. Below the surface of the modern path, which comprised 0.2m of concrete, was 0.75m of mid brown silty clay subsoil with frequent gravel inclusions, below this was the undisturbed natural mid brown-yellow sharp sand with frequent gravel inclusions.
- 4.4 There were no archaeological features observed and no pre-modern artefacts were recovered from the up-cast deposits

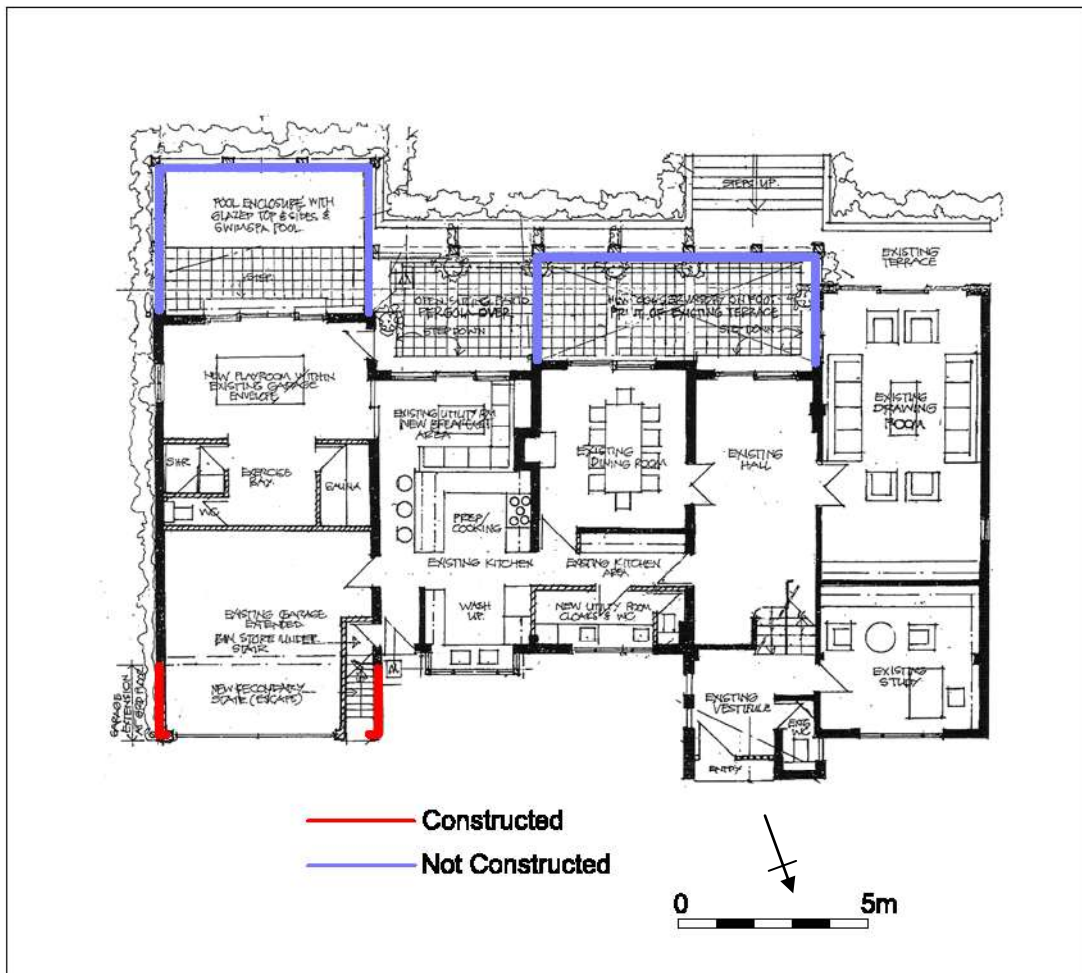


Figure 3: Overall development plan (scale 1:200)

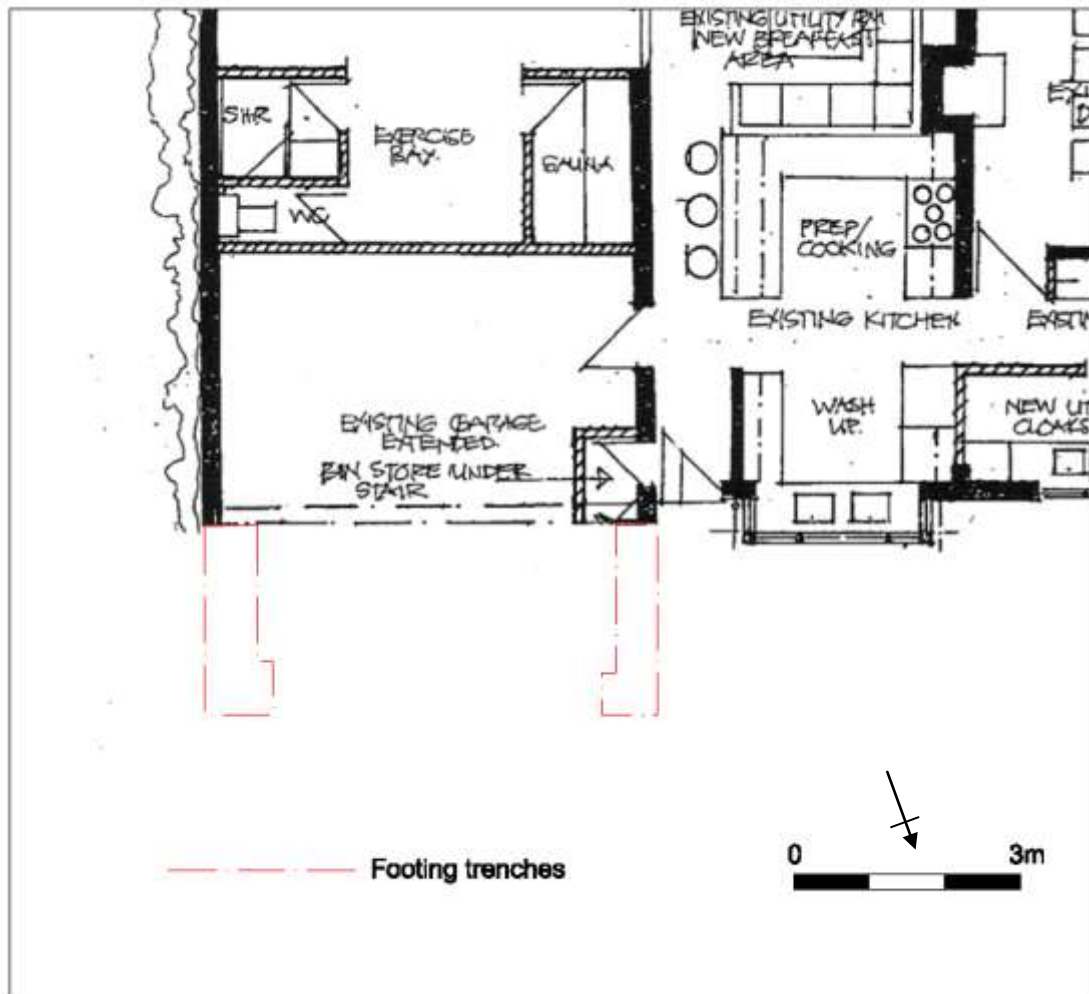


Figure 4: Footing trench location (scale 1:100)



Plate 1: General working shot, looking south



Plate 2: Eastern footing trench, looking south, 2x1m scales



Plate 3: Eastern footing trench, looking north, 2x1m scales

5. Conclusions

5.1 No significant archaeological features were discovered within the limited groundworks of the garage extension. While the existence of individual isolated archaeological features away from the trenches cannot be specifically excluded, it is unlikely that large numbers of archaeological features were present on the site. It is unlikely that the development has had a significant impact on archaeological remains.

5.2 *Confidence Rating*

The conditions for the watching brief were good and the work took place in dry and sunny weather conditions. Full co-operation was received from the contractors and a very high degree of confidence is attached to the results of the evaluation.

6. Acknowledgements

The watching brief was commissioned by *Mr and Mrs C Meadows*. The writer is grateful to Mr Meadows for his assistance. The project was monitored by Simon West on behalf of the local planning authority. Thanks are also due to the builders involved.

The project was managed for ASC by Karin Semmelmann BA MA MIFA. Fieldwork was carried out by Martin Cuthbert BA. The report was prepared by Martin Cuthbert and edited by Bob Zeepvat BA MIFA.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Project Design
2. Initial Report
3. Clients site plans
4. Site Monitoring Sheets
5. Site record drawings
6. List of photographs
7. B/W prints & negatives
8. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with St Albans Museum.

8. References

Standards & Specifications

- ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **14**.
- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition. English Heritage (London).
- Fell D 2009 *Project Design for Archaeological Watching Brief at Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close, St Albans*. ASC Ref: 1185/SPC/1
- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2000b Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*.
- IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.

Secondary Sources

- Anthony I E 1968 'Excavations in Verulam Hills Field, St Albans 1963-4'. *Hertfordshire Archaeology* **1**, 9-50.
- BGS *British Geological Survey 1:50,000 Series, Solid & Drift Geology*.
- Frere S 1972 *Verulamium Excavations Vol 1*. Report of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquities of London. **28**.
- Neal D S, Wardle A and Hunn J 1990 *Excavation of the Iron Age, Roman and Medieval Settlement at Gorhambury, St Albans*. English Heritage Archaeological Report. **14**
- Niblett R. 1999 *The Excavation of a ceremonial Site at Folly Lane, Verulamium*. Britannia Monograph Series **14**
- Niblett R 2001 *Verulamium. The Roman City of St Albans*. Tempus
- Niblett R & Thompson I 2005 *Alban's Buried Towns. An Assessment of St Albans Archaeology up to AD1600*. Oxbow Books
- Saunders C & Havercroft A B 1978 'Excavations in the City and District of St Albans 1974-76' *Hertfordshire Archaeology*, **6**, 1-77
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).
- Stead I M & Rigby V 1989 *Verulamium The King Harry Lane Site*. English Heritage Archaeological Report No: 12.
- Wheeler R E M & Wheeler T V 1936 *Verulamium A Belgic and Two Roman Cities*. Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquities London.

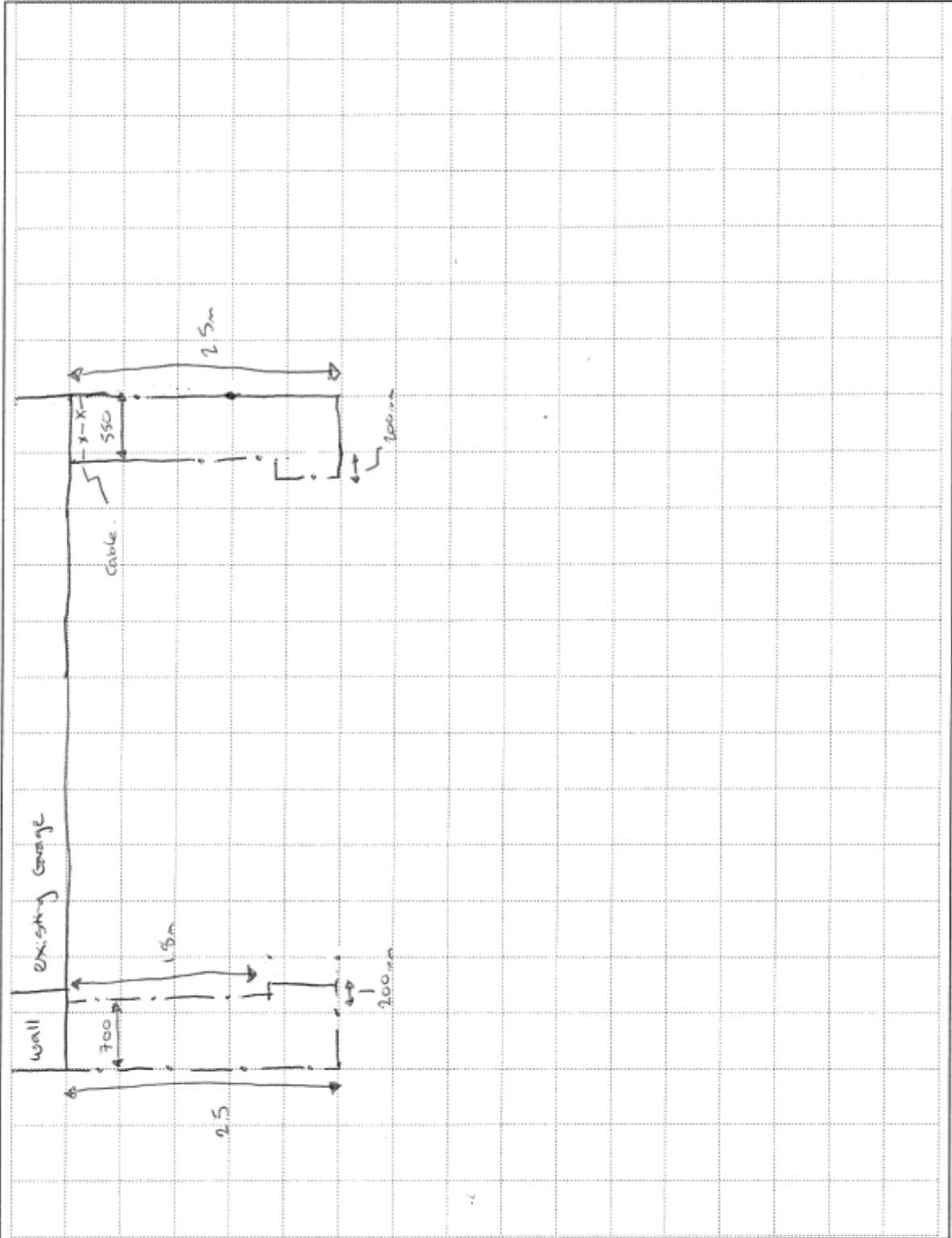
Appendix 1: Monitoring Sheets

A.S.C. LTD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD		
Project: Ver Lodge		Project No/Code: 1185 / SPC	Sheet: 1 of 2	
ST Albans		Date of visit: 5/5/09		
Client/Developer client house owner.				
Contact: Chris Meadows		Phone: 07956 26139		
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 07:30	Finish: 12:30		
Completed by: M.C				
Development Type:				
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying
				Pipelines
				Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: dry				
Observations: footing trenches for a new extension. to the front of the garage				
1m deep - N-S on eastern end =				
• 100mm - tarmac and type 1				
• 300mm - top soil dark brown silty loam freq gravel max 40mm				
• 600mm - subsoil - mid brown silty 90% clay 10% + sand. freq gravel + flint max 150mm				
• 1m > gravel + flint v. freq in sharp sand. = natural				
1m deep N-S on western end =				
• 100mm - concrete				
• 750mm - subsoil (see above)				
• 150mm - natural (see above)				
Comments: no more groundworks needed. conservatory + pool area may go ahead but not in the foreseeable, need to speak to Chris - After talking with Chris it was discovered that the developments to the south of the house are not happening until a much later date.				



SKETCH SHEET

Site Name: Ver Lodge, St Albans	Site Code: 1185 / SPC	Orientation:
Context: Garage extension 1:50		



RECORDING NOTES

Recorded by: M.C	Date: 5/5/09	Digitised by:	Date:	Sheet number: 2 of 2
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Appendix 2: List of Photographs

SITE NAME: Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close, St Albans			SITE NO/CODE: 1185/SPC
Shot	B&W	Digital	Subject
1	√	√	Footing trench, looking south, 2x1m scales
2		√	Footing trench, looking south, 2x1m scales
3		√	Footing trench, looking east, 2x1m scales
4		√	Footing trench, looking north, 2x1m scales
5		√	General working shot
6		√	General working shot
7		√	General working shot

Appendix 3: ASC OASIS Form

PROJECT DETAILS			
Project Name:	Ver Lodge, 9Pondwicks Close, St Albans		
Short Description:	In May 2009 Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd carried out a watching brief during the groundworks for an extension to a garage at Ver Lodge, 9 Pondwicks Close, St Albans. No deposits or finds of archaeological significance were revealed. However, as the ground works were limited in scope this does not preclude the presence of archaeological remains elsewhere on the site.		
Project Type: (indicate all that apply)	Watching Brief		
Site status: (eg. none, SAM, Listed)	None	Previous work: (eg. SMR refs)	None
Current land use:	House and Garedens	Future work: (yes / no / unknown)	Yes
Monument type:	N/a	Monument period:	N/a
Significant finds: (artefact type & period)	None		
PROJECT LOCATION			
County:	Herts	OS reference: (8 figs min)	TL 1439 0678
District:	St Albans	Parish:	St Albans
Site address: (with postcode if known)	Ver Lodge 9 Pondwicks Close St Albans AL1 1DG		
Study area: (sq. m. or ha)	0.6 ha	Height OD: (metres)	80m
PROJECT CREATORS			
Organisation:	Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd		
Project brief originator:	N/a	Project design originator:	David Fell – ASC Ltd
Project Manager:	Karin Semmelmann	Director/Supervisor:	Martin Cuthbert
Sponsor / funding body:	Mr Chris Meadows		
PROJECT DATE			
Start date:	05/05/09	End date:	05/05/09
PROJECT ARCHIVES			
	Location (Accession no.)	Content (eg. pottery, animal bone, files/sheets)	
Physical:	N/A	None	
Paper:	St Albans Museum	Documents, Survey notes, drawings, photos	
Digital:		CD with all digital files	
BIBLIOGRAPHY (Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report)			
Title:	WATCHING BRIEF: VER LODGE 9 PONDWICKS CLOSE ST ALBANS		
Serial title & volume:	ASC Ltd Report ref. 1185/SPC/2		
Author(s):	Martin Cuthbert BA (Hons)		
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