

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**  
**ON LAND TO THE REAR OF FOOTBRIDGE COTTAGE,**  
**HIGH ST, LONG WITTENHAM**  
**OXFORDSHIRE**  
**NGR SU 5453 9369**

*On behalf of*

*RSA Architects*

**MAY 2011**

**REPORT FOR** RSA Architects  
The Dovecote  
Long Wittenham  
Oxfordshire  
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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for the construction of a new build to the west of Footbridge Cottage, High St Long Wittenham. A single roughly north/south orientated ditch, with a single sherd of pottery dating from after the 11<sup>th</sup> century was present.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The site was located on the southern side of High Street, in the centre of the historic settlement (NGR SU 5453 9369) to the west, and in the grounds, of the present Footbridge Cottage. The site lies at approximately 50m OD. The underlying geology is First Terrace River Gravel deposits. The existing land use was garden.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) granted planning permission for the erection of a two-storey three bedroom dwelling and footbridge (P10/W1395). Due to the potential for archaeological remains to be present an archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundworks. This was due to advice given to SODC by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS).

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

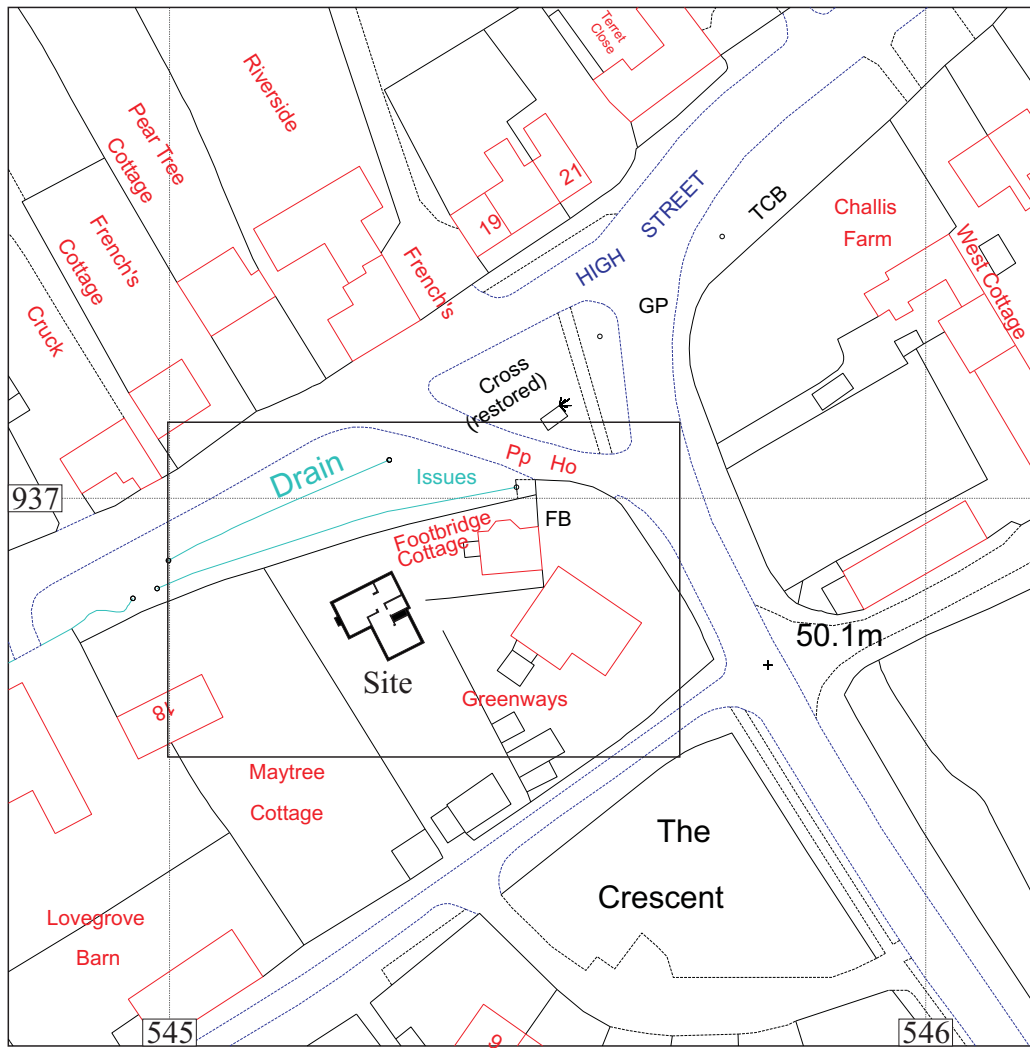
The development site lies within an area of archaeological interest located within the medieval core of the village. The site of the Village Cross (PRN 2863), the base of which is dated to 15<sup>th</sup> century, is located 50m NE of the site. A grade II listed building (PRN 21196), also dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, is located 30m SW of the proposal site and a 14<sup>th</sup> century house, Cruck House (PRN 12866), is located 40m to the north.

Approximately 100m south of the site, an Anglo Saxon burial ground has been recorded. This composed 46 cremations and 188 inhumation burials. The large cemetery is likely to be associated with a complex series of cropmarks including a Saxon timber hall and enclosures recorded on the south side of the village, 200m SE of the proposed new dwelling (PRM 15311). Other Saxon finds and deposits have also been recorded from the vicinity. It is therefore likely that further archaeological deposits related to the Saxon and medieval settlements are likely to survive in the area.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

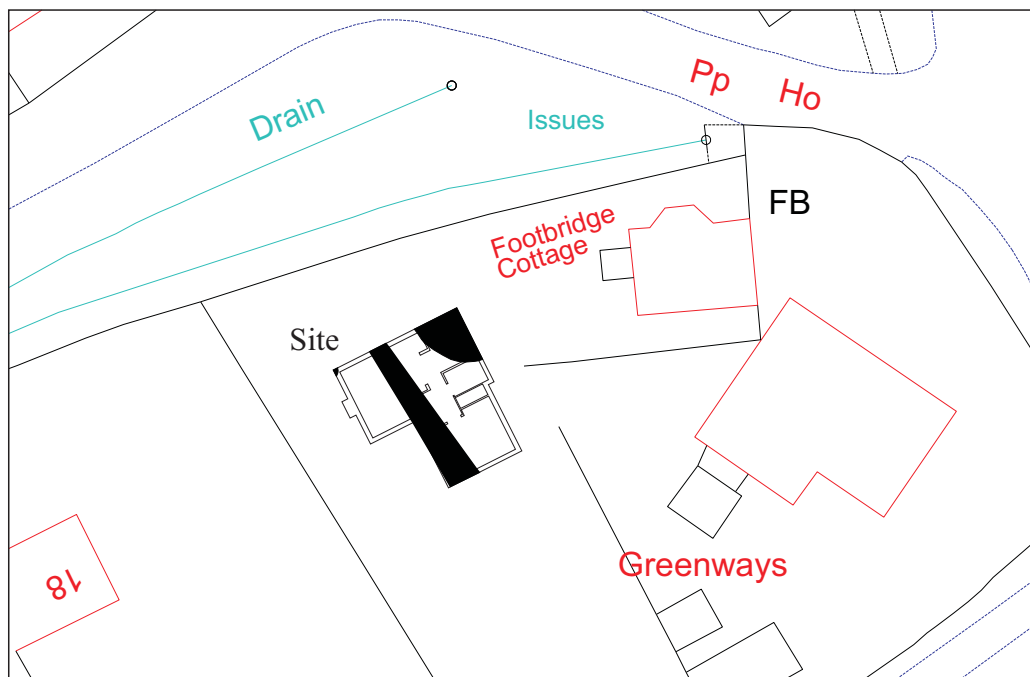
The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.



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0 50 m



0 25 m

Figure 1. Site location

A particular objective was

- to record any evidence associated with the former Saxon and medieval settlements

### **3 STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the client and OCAS, on behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (2008).

#### **3.2 Methodology**

Ground-reduction by a 5-tonne excavator equipped with a grading bucket within the footprint of the new-build and trenching for footings with a toothed bucket were observed.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate.

### **4 RESULTS**

#### **4.1 Results (Figure 2)**

The natural undisturbed ground was bright yellow gravel (103) *c.* 0.9m below modern ground level. This was observed in all sections of the footings trench.

Overlying the gravel was a deposit of subsoil (102), which consisted of reddish brown sandy silt with up to *c.* 15% gravel through it. It was 0.3m thick. The subsoil was cut by the ditch 105, visible along the central line of the new-build (Fig. 2). The ditch 105, which measured 2.1m wide at the south end of the investigation area was approximately 1.2m wide at the north end, fronting onto High St. The sides and base of the ditch were concave. The fill (104) of the ditch 105 was a mid brown sandy silt. A sherd of South-East Oxfordshire ware was recovered from the fill indicating a date after the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

In the north corner an undated quarry pit 107 measuring more than 3m × 3.8m was present. It was undated, but the fill (106) was similar to the fill of the ditch 105.

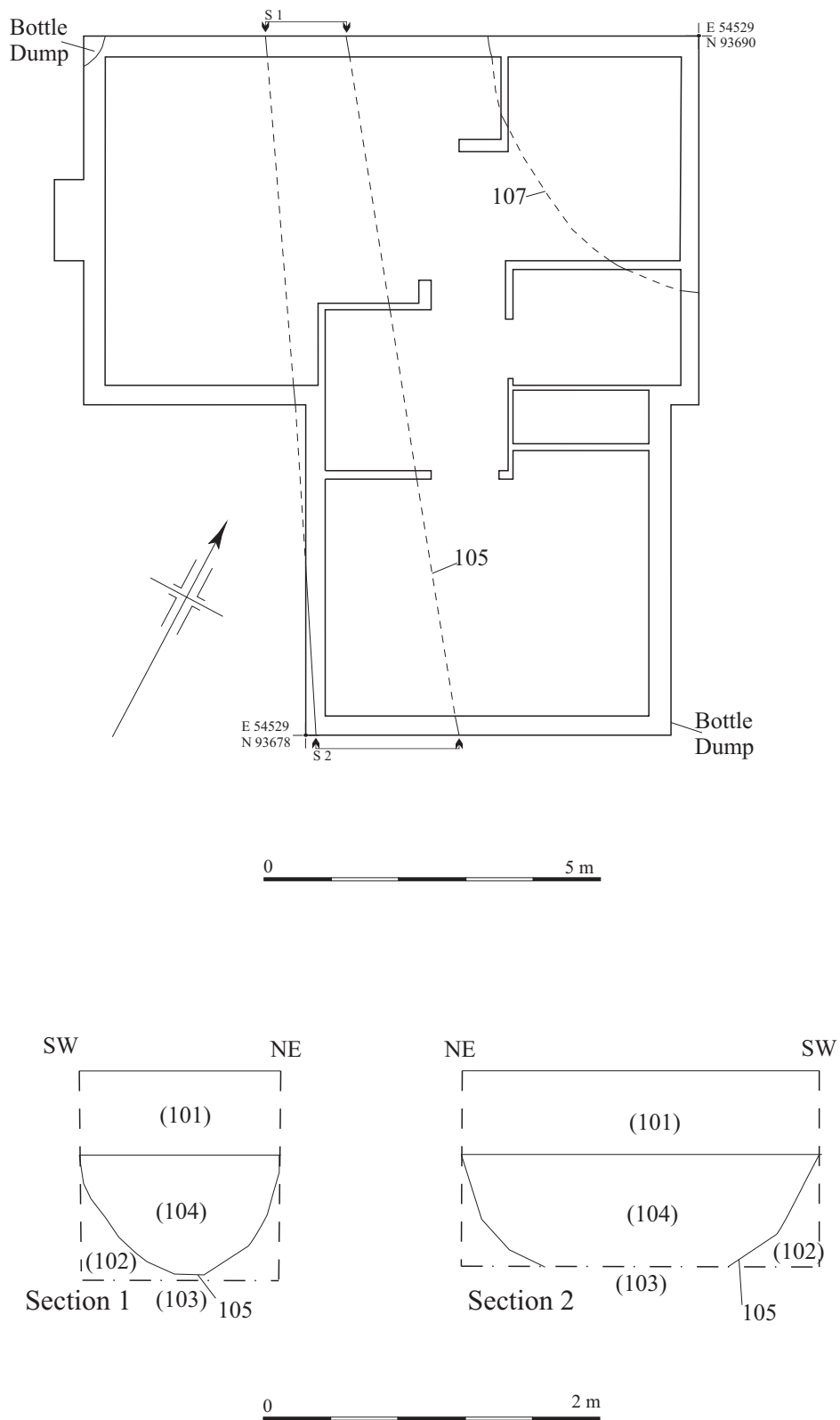


Figure 2. Plan and sections

Two Victorian or later bottle dumps were observed, but not recorded, in the west and east corners of the new build. No finds were retained from either.

All features were sealed by topsoil (101), which was *c.* 0.6m thick across the site.

## **4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results**

The watching brief was conducted under good conditions.

## **5 FINDS**

### **5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn**

A single sherd of medieval pottery was noted in context (104), a ditch fill. The sherd weighs 7g, is in good condition, and appears reliably stratified. It is a plain bodysherd from a jar. It is South-East Oxfordshire ware, classified as fabric OX162 in the Oxfordshire type-series (Mellor 1994), and has a date range of the late 11<sup>th</sup> – late 13<sup>th</sup> century.

### **5.2 Environmental Remains**

No samples were taken for environmental remains as the deposits were not felt to warrant sampling.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

The watching brief revealed a medieval ditch running north/south dating from after the 11<sup>th</sup> century. This ditch does not appear on any of the Ordnance Survey maps. It may well represent a medieval field or property boundary, which, oriented at right angles to High St, is more likely to have been the latter. The large pit was more than likely a quarry pit for gravel, possibly associated with the construction of houses in the vicinity. Given the limited view of the ditch and the pit it is not possible to be certain whether they had any relationship with one another. What is clear is that neither feature is visible on any OS maps since 1875 (1:2500). The bottle dumps, however, can easily be associated with Footbridge Cottage, which since the 1875 OS map has held the land where the new build is to be located.

## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 2008 (Revised), *Standard and Guidance for An Archaeological Field Watching Brief*.

Mellor, M., 1994 Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region *Oxoniensia* **59**, 17-217