

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**MERIDEN COURT, WALLINGFORD, ELECTRICITY
CABLE TRENCH
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

On behalf of

Scottish and Southern Energy

July 2011

REPORT FOR Scottish and Southern Energy
PO Box 149
Yarnton
Kidlington
Oxfordshire
OX5 1YZ

PREPARED BY Paul Riccoboni AIFA

EDITED BY John Moore MIFA

ILLUSTRATION BY Eoin Fitzsimons PIFA

FIELDWORK 31st January to 3rd February 2011

REPORT ISSUED 20th July 2011

ENQUIRES TO John Moore Heritage Services
Hill View
Woodperry Road
Beckley
Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ

Tel/Fax 01865 358300
Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk

Site Code WAMC 10
JMHS Project No: 2231
Archive Location The archive is currently held by JMHS and will be deposited with Oxford Museum Services in due course under Accession number 2011.34

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>SUMMARY</i>	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	3
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	3
3 STRATEGY	3
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	3
4 RESULTS	5
4.1 The Field Results	5
4.2 Reliability of Results	5
5 FINDS	5
5.1 The Flint by Dave Gilbert	5
6 DISCUSSION	6
7 ARCHIVE	6
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	6
FIGURES	
Figure 1: Site location	2
Figure 2: Site Plan	4
Plate 1: General shot of electricity cable trench	7

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS) undertook an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a new electricity cable re-routed around the perimeter of a new residential development at Meriden Court. The residential development was subject to archaeological monitoring which is reported on in a separate document (JMHS Project No. 2000).

Four site visits were made during late January through to early February 2011. A possible Saxon pit was uncovered. Other Post-medieval and modern features were encountered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site was located to the north of St John's Road and west of Croft Road. This is west of the historic centre of the town of Wallingford (NGR SU 6028 8920). The underlying geology is First (Floodplain) Terrace Deposits (Geological Survey of Great Britain, Henley-on-Thames Sheet 254; Solid and Drift Geology 1:50,000) and the site lies at approximately 47m OD.

1.2 Planning Background

South Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission under planning application number P08/W0562 for the demolition of existing garages and development of 9 two-bedroom houses. This was after refusal of an earlier application (P07/W0868). Due to the potential of the site to contain archaeological remains a condition was attached requiring that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during the period of construction works. This was in line with PPG 16 and Local Plan policies.

The condition attached to the planning consent stated that:

A full archaeological watching brief shall be carried out during the period of construction works by a professionally competent archaeological organisation in accordance with details, which shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before development commences. The brief shall include the recording of any archaeological features revealed, limited archaeological excavation and the retrieval of artefactual evidence. Reason: To secure the protection of and proper provision for any archaeological remains in accordance with Government advice set out in PPG16 'Archaeology and Planning' and in accordance with Policies CON11, CON13 and CON14 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011

The Brief (OCAS 2010) was prepared with regard to the new guidelines of PPS5 due to the presence of known heritage assets in the immediate vicinity of the development proposals and in accordance with the Local Plan Policies.

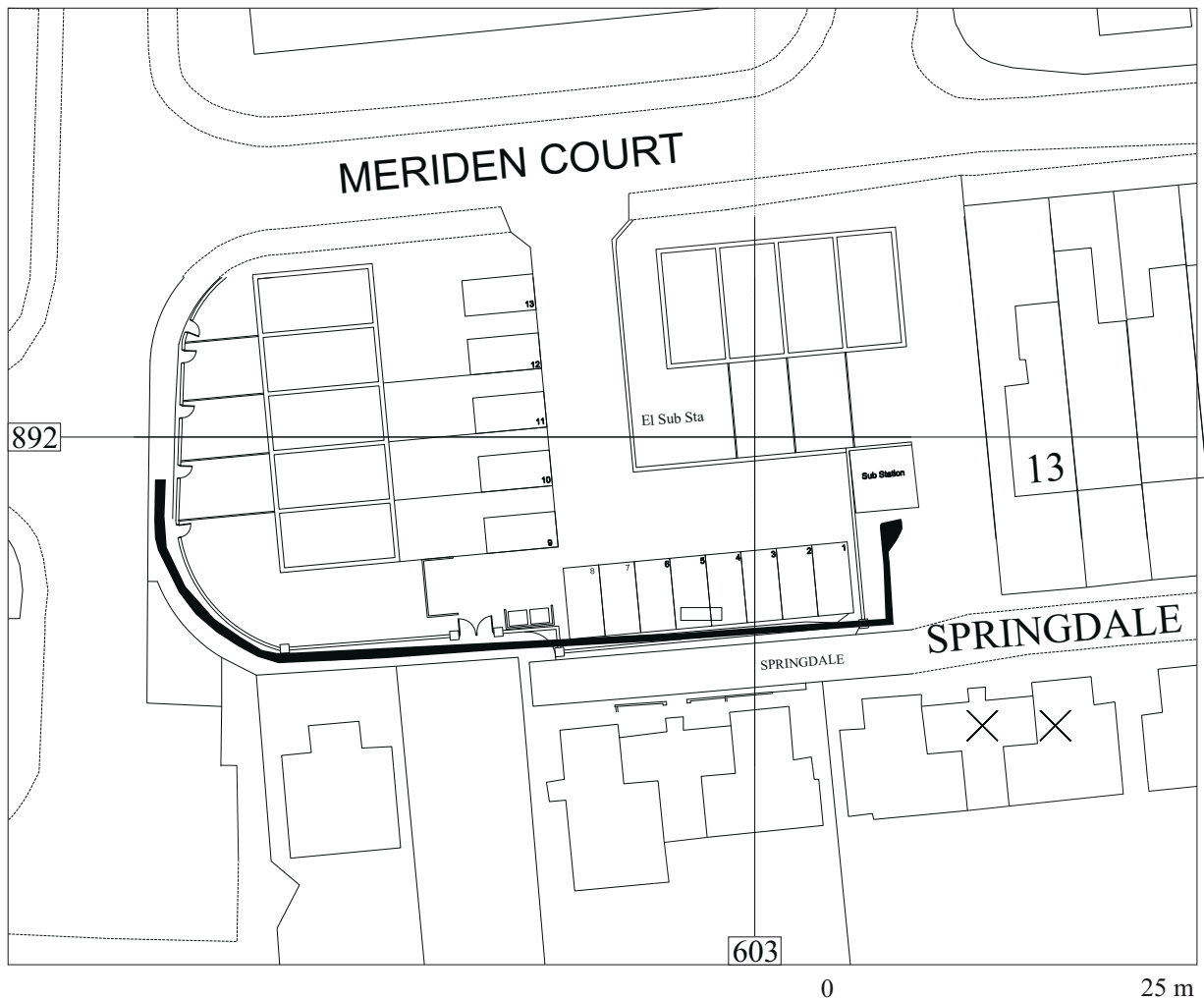
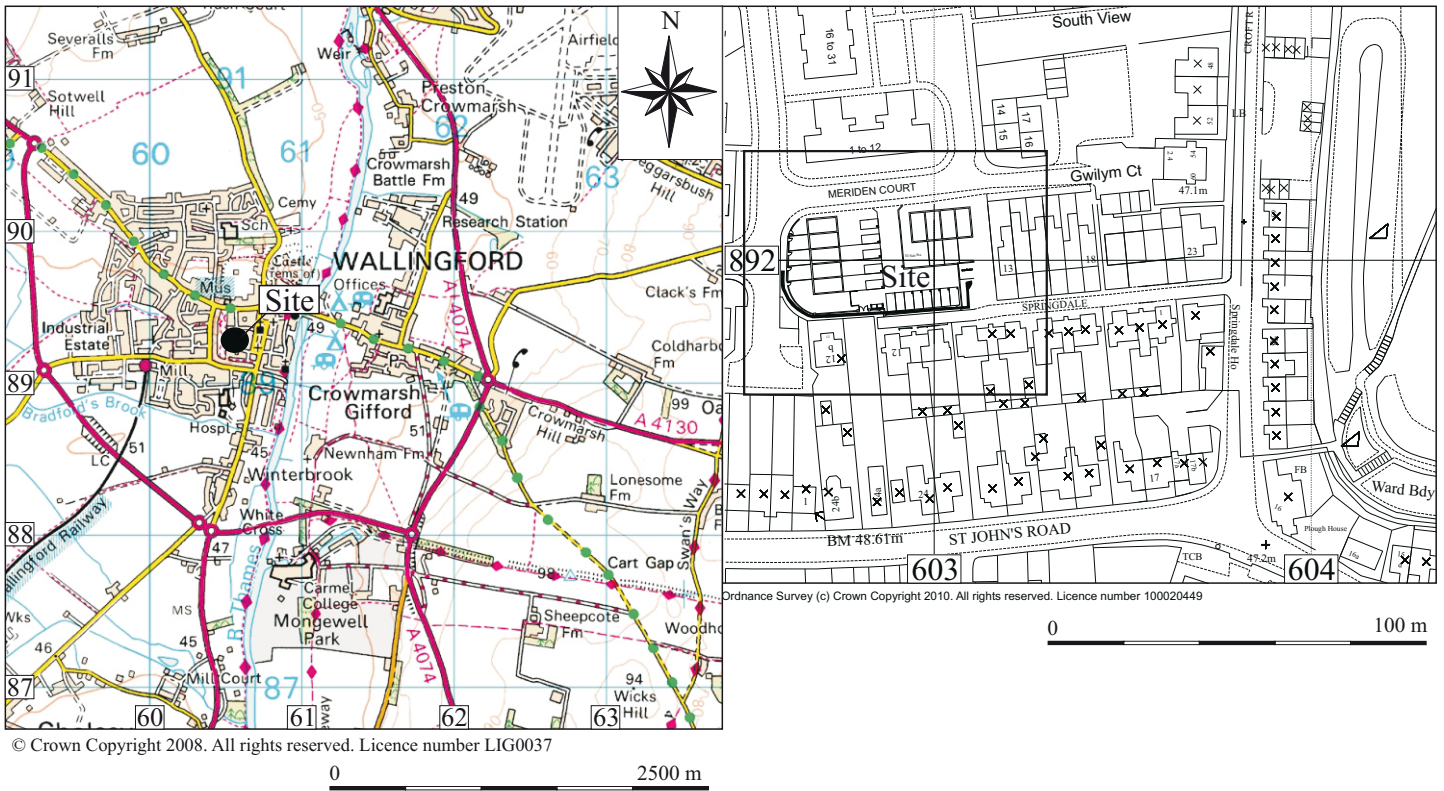


Figure 1. Site location

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site is located 1000m west of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of The Saxon Town Walls (OX182; NGR SU 6034 8925). The walls are believed to have been constructed around *c.* 900AD. While the site was located outside the enclosed area of the town an archaeological watching brief carried out 70m to the east of the site recorded a series of medieval and early post-medieval pits suggesting settlement outside of the walls in the medieval period (County Historic Environment Record PRN 16094, NGR SU 6034 8924). Further medieval settlement has been recorded 120m to the north-west of the site in the form of linear ditches and medieval pottery and tile (PRN 10595, SU 6020 8930). A Saxon inhumation cemetery was recorded 170m to the south-east of the site, which was excavated as a number of sites (PRN 7791, SU 6043 8907). A recent watching brief at 2 Norman Way 120m west failed to find anything of significance.

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.
- In particular to record any evidence of Saxon or medieval settlement known to exist in the area.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

Due to the high potential of the site to contain buried archaeological remains a condition was attached to the planning consent requiring that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during all groundworks. Oxfordshire Archaeological Services (OCAS), the Archaeological Advisor to South Oxfordshire District Council, prepared a *Brief* for the archaeological work. Based on the brief A *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) was prepared by JMHS (JMHS 2010). This document outlined the method by which the watching brief would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

The Brief (OCAS 2010) was prepared with regard to the new guidelines of PPS5 due to the presence of known heritage assets in the immediate vicinity of the development proposals and in accordance with the Local Plan Policies.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during the excavation of the electricity cable trench excavated to a width of *c.* 0.25-0.40m and general depth of 0.50m beneath the present ground surface. In an area designated for car parking the cable trench was

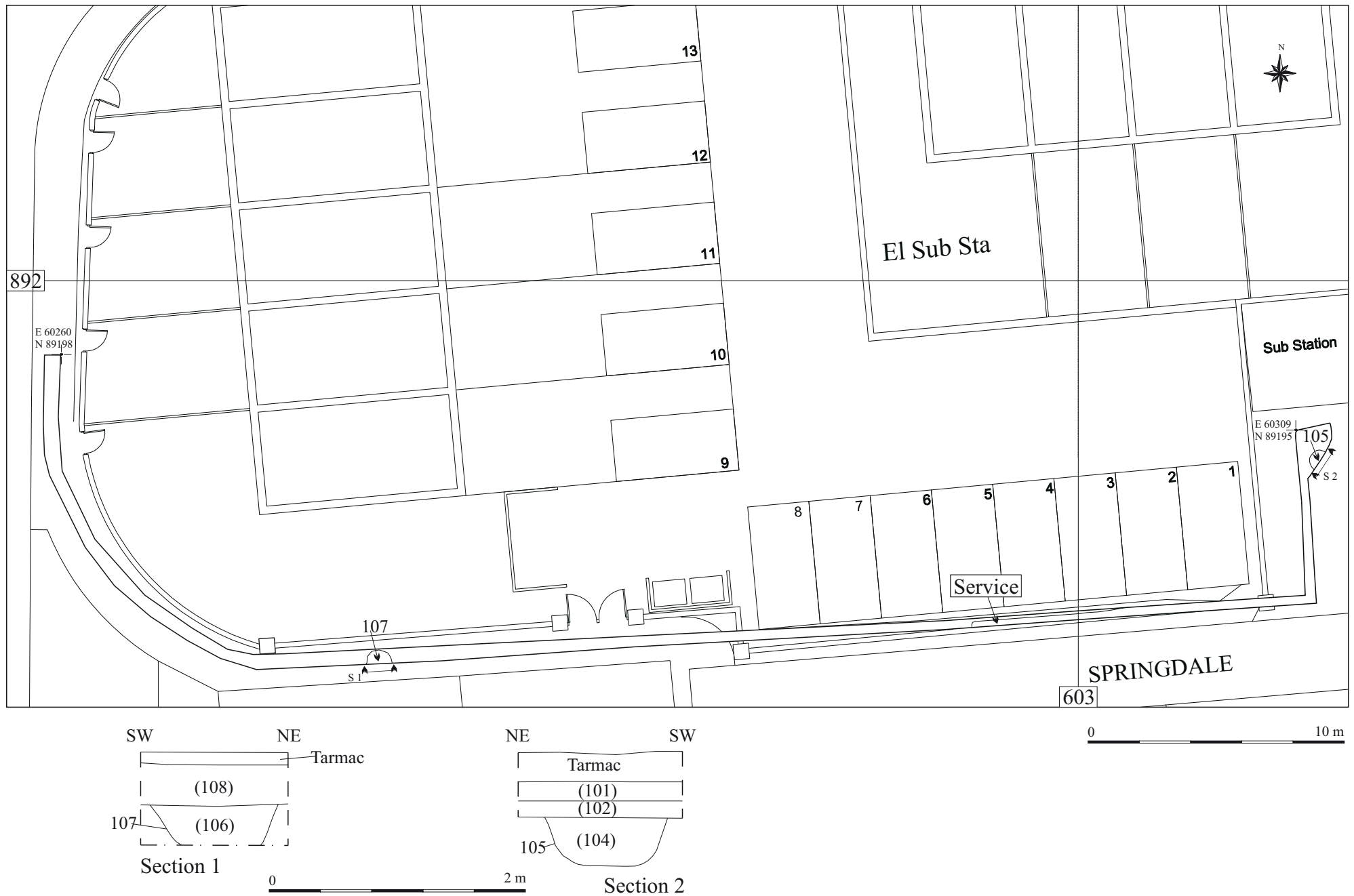


Figure 2. Plan and sections

deeper reaching a total depth of 0.90m beneath the present ground surface.

Any archaeological features revealed were cleaned by hand and recorded in plan before being excavated. Any archaeological features were recorded by written, drawn and photographic record. All artefacts were collected and retained.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Field Results

All features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in () indicate feature fills or deposits of material.

4.2 The Electricity Cable Trench (Plate 1)

A cable trench 0.25-0.40m in width and *c.* 0.50-0.90m in depth was excavated around the perimeter of the development site (Fig. 1). The overburden consisted of the following stratigraphic sequence. The natural clay with gravels was located at the base of the trench (103). This was overlain by *c.* 0.15m thick dark brownish grey silty clay subsoil with gravel inclusions (102). The latest deposit was 0.20-0.40m thick dark brownish black silty clay topsoil (101).

At the southern end of the cable trench, adjacent to the electricity sub station, an archaeological feature was hand excavated and recorded.

Pit [105] (Fig. 2; Section 2) was 0.80m in width and 0.40m in depth with sharp concave curving sides and a flat base. It was filled by dark brownish black silty clay (04) with one sherd of possible very degraded Saxon pottery too fragile to be retained.

Pit [107] was a minimum 0.40m in depth and 1m in wide with a curving concave side and unknown base (Fig. 2; Section 1). It was filled by dark brownish black silty clay with occasional ceramic building material (CBM).

4.2 Reliability of Results

The watching brief was carried out in clement conditions with good co-operation from the contractor carrying out the groundworks and the results are felt to be representative.

5 FINDS

5.5 Flint (By David Gilbert)

A single small possible hammer-stone was recovered from the topsoil (101). Weighing only 23g it is on the lowest end for hammer-stone weights, however its ergonomic feel and localised crushing impact marks would indicate to be a hammer-stone. It does display some later damage. It is a dark grey-brown flint with some cortex (*c.* 20%) still surviving, possibly originating from the gravel deposits.

6 DISCUSSION

The watching brief undertaken at during the Meriden Court electricity cable re-route trench has added to our knowledge of possible Saxon activity in Wallingford. The site lies in area outside the walls of the known Saxon town, but earlier archaeological work during the residential development (JMHS Report 2000-Forthcoming) proved Saxon activity continued into this area of Wallingford.

The watching brief has proved that archaeological features exist outside the Town Walls of Wallingford and more archaeological work in the area may help to establish what the area was used for and why it went out of use.

The narrow trench was provided a good cross section of the stratigraphy of the site and indicates further archaeological features are likely to exist in the immediate area.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper Record

The project brief	The project report
Written Scheme of Investigation	The primary site records
The drawn records	

The finds

The archive and finds are currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services. The archive will be transferred to:

The Oxfordshire Museum Service under accession number 2010.35

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

JMHS 2010 Meriden Court, Wallingford, Oxfordshire; Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation JMHS Project Number 2000

English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*

English Heritage 2006 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* Revised 2001

OCAS 2010 Meriden Court, Wallingford, Oxfordshire; Brief for archaeological monitoring work.



Plate 1: General shot of Electricity cable trench