

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

16 PRIEST END, THAME

On behalf of

Morgan Architectural Designs

JULY 2011

REPORT FOR Morgan Architectural Designs
1 Wickam House
Market Square
Witney
Oxfordshire
OX28 6AF

PREPARED BY Juan Moreno and Adrian M. Chadwick

ILLUSTRATION BY Eoin Fitzsimons

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Juan Moreno

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ENQUIRES TO John Moore Heritage Services
Hill View
Woodperry Road
Beckley
Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ
Tel/Fax 01865 358300
Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk

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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out a watching brief on ground works at 16 Priest End, Thame on the 8th and 13th June 2011, during the construction of an extension to an existing residential building. A small drain and a 'soak away' of probable early modern or modern date were observed in a construction trench to the rear and west of the property, whilst further to the east a large pit or additional 'soak away' feature was recorded. This was also likely to be of early modern (19th or early 20th century) date.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location

The groundwork took place on land (hereafter referred to as 'the Site') on the western side of Thame, South Oxfordshire, north of the High Street and south-west of St Mary's Church (NGR SP 7029 0622; Figure 1). The underlying geology consists of Kimmeridge and Ampthill Clay, and the Site is situated at approximately 66m OD. The Site is currently in use as a residential property.

1.2 Planning Background

South Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission in January 2010 for the demolition of an outhouse structure and side extension to the existing building at 16 Priest End, and the construction of a roof extension, single storey extensions and the conversion of the existing garage into living accommodation (P09/E1214). Due to the potential presence of below ground archaeological remains a condition for an archaeological watching brief was attached to the permission, following advice given to South Oxfordshire District Council by Oxford County Archaeological Services (OCAS), who also prepared a Design Brief for the archaeological work programme. The *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2221/01) was prepared in response to the Design Brief, and outlined the methodology by which the watching brief was carried out.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The Site is situated on the western side of Thame, within the medieval part of the settlement. It is approximately 120m south-west of the 12th century Church of St Mary (PRN 4067) which was associated with a medieval and Saxon cemetery. The Site is also *circa.* 88m south-west of the medieval manor of Bishop's Court House (PRN 999). In addition, there is a 17th century building 32m south-west of the Site (PRN 21556), and a 15th or 16th century tithe barn immediately west of Bishop's Court House (PRN 996).

The 1st and 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey maps of the area depict a series of probable farm buildings forming a square courtyard to the west of the tithe barn. A rectangular building with a north-east to south-west orientated long axis is indicated on the location of the Site. The function of this building is not known, but it may have been associated with the tithe barn and manor house and could thus be of similar date.

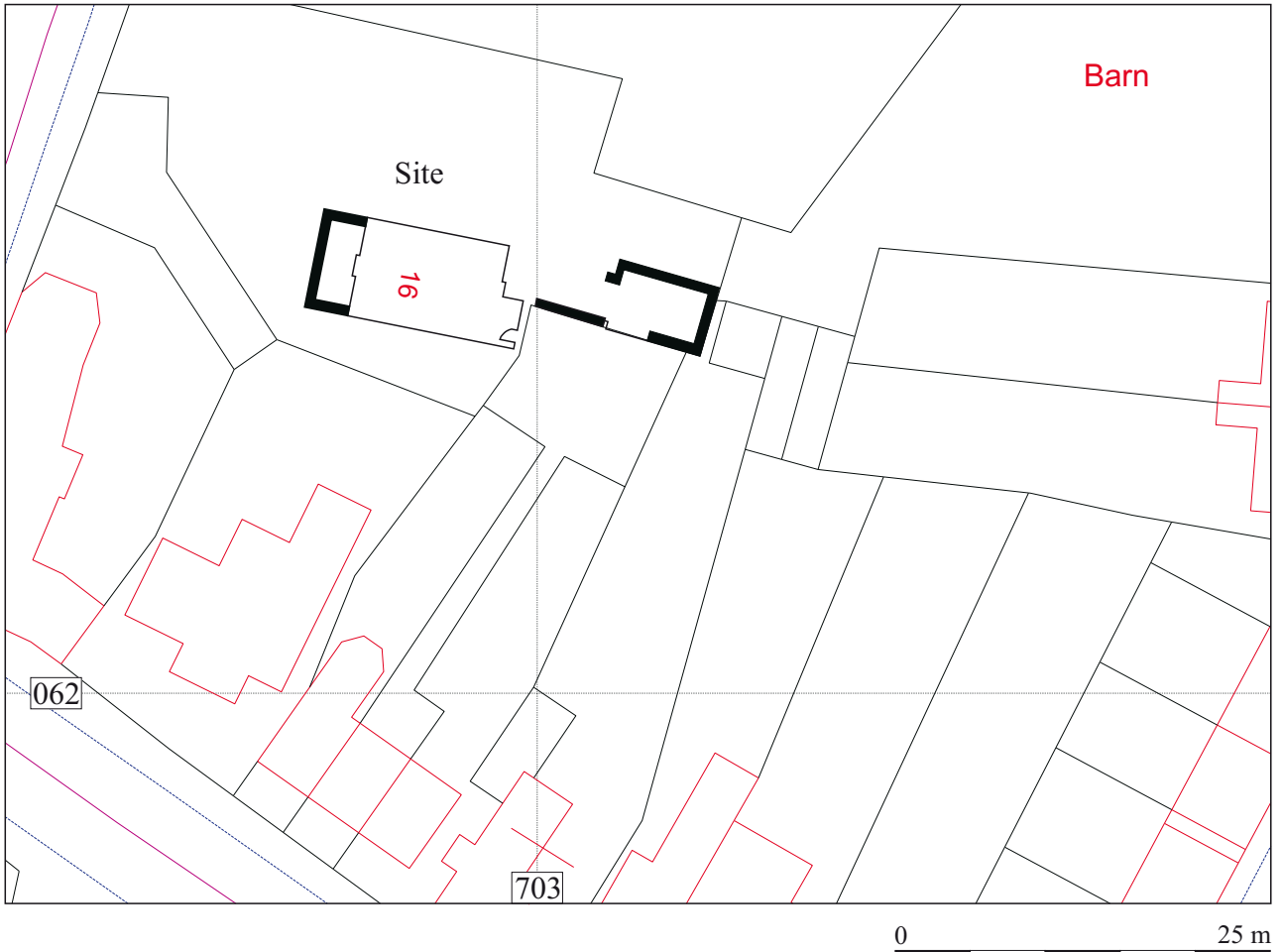
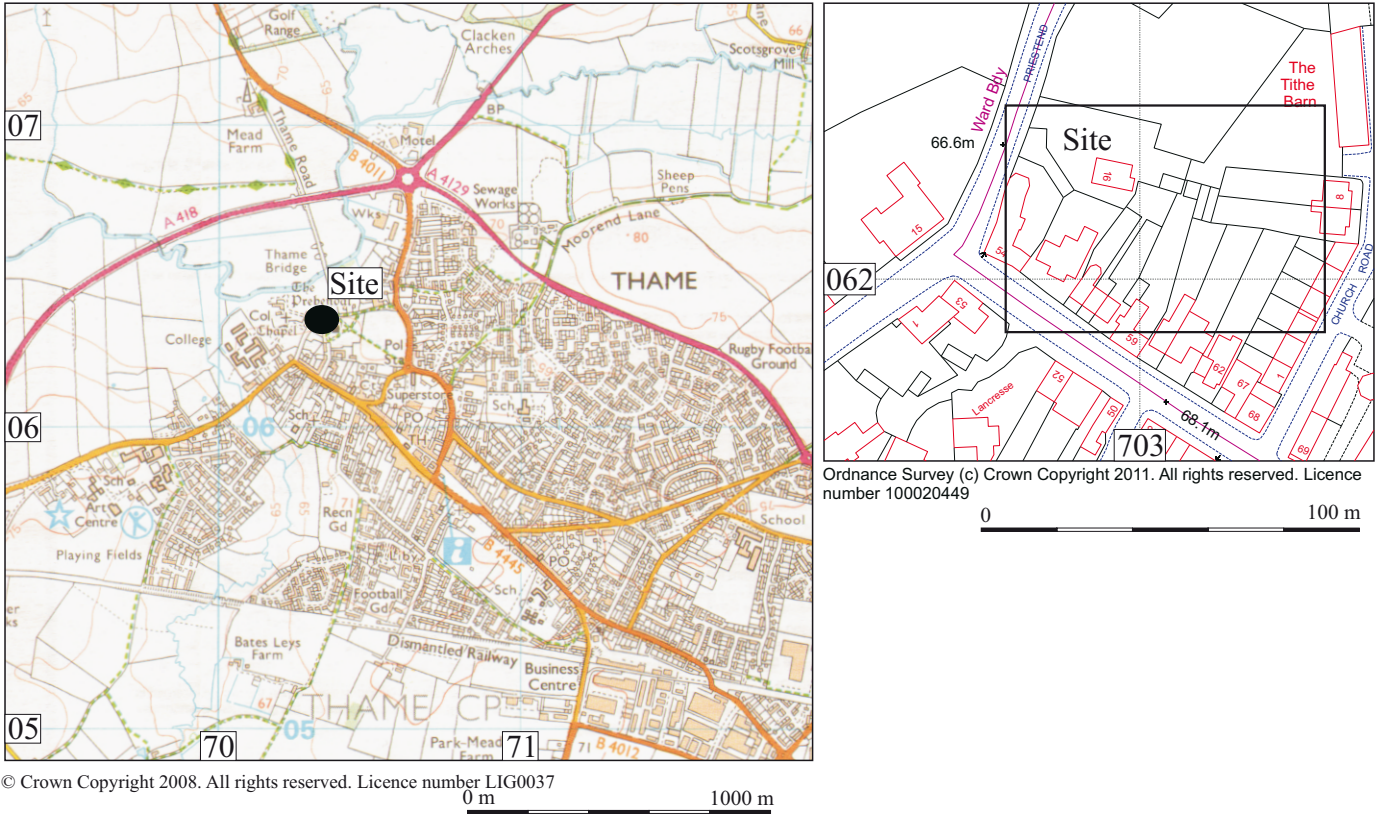


Figure 1. Site location

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To make a record of any significant remains during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains;
- In particular to record any evidence relating to the medieval settlement of Thame.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

An archaeologist would be present on Site during the course of any groundwork that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains, including any reduction in ground level, excavations for foundations and services and any additional intrusive works.

Any archaeological deposits and features revealed would be cleaned by hand and recorded in plan before being excavated and recorded at an appropriate level. Archaeological features or other archaeological remains such as a concentration of artefacts would have written, drawn and photographic records made of them. Where archaeological features were exposed during any reduction in ground level but were otherwise unaffected, these would only be recorded through written descriptions and plans, whilst any surface finds would be retained. Where archaeological features or remains would be impacted by any groundwork, they would be sample excavated. Any variations to this would be agreed with the Oxford County Archaeological Services (OCAS).

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist monitored all the invasive groundwork; and all resulting surfaces were then inspected for any significant archaeological features.

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 produced where appropriate.

4 RESULTS

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers without brackets indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in brackets () show feature fills or deposits of material.

4.1 The Footings of the Building Extension (Trench 1)

This area was located to the west of the existing property, and consisted of a footing trench 0.5m wide and up to 0.80m deep. The topsoil in this area consisted of friable to loose very dark brown clayey silt up to 0.13m deep, extending across the entire area. This deposit (1/01) contained modern glass and ceramic building material. Below this was a layer of more compact grey-brown to orange-brown sand and gravel, up to 0.15m thick and containing angular flints (1/02). This was probably a natural river terrace deposit. Underneath it was very compact orange brown clay with some fine sand and gravel, at least 0.50m thick, and also a natural geological deposit.

The line of an early modern or a modern drain was observed in the footings trench to the north-west of the existing building, leading to a 'soak away' feature filled by modern tile and brick fragments; whilst the sub-rectangular cut of a probable 'soak away' feature was identified approximately 3m to the south.

4.2 The Footings of the Garage Redevelopment (Trench 2)

This area was located to the east of the existing building where the old garage had been located. Footing trenches up to 0.60m wide and 1m deep formed a rectangular line in plan. In the north-west part of this area a large cut feature 2/06 was identified. This appeared to be sub-rectangular or perhaps rectilinear in plan, and was at least 7m long and 2.5m wide, though its full width and length were not exposed. Over most of its extent it had been machined away, exposing only the lower of its fills, but it was recorded in section. Its western edge sloped at approximately 45 degrees, but its full depth was not determined as it continued below the base of the footings trench. Its upper fill (2/04) consisted of friable dark brown clayey silt up to 0.32m deep, with modern glass and brick or tile fragments. Below this was a layer of more compact grey-brown to orange-brown sand and gravel (2/05), up to 0.15m thick and containing angular flints. The lowest recorded fill (2/07/) was a soft, dark brown clayey silt at least 0.60m thick. This contained some early modern glass and pottery fragments.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery, Glass and Brick/tile

Pottery dating from the 19th or early 20th centuries was recovered from the primary fill of cut 2/06 in Trench 2. Modern glass and brick or tile fragments were also found in the upper fill of this feature.

5.2 Environmental Remains

No environmental samples were taken.

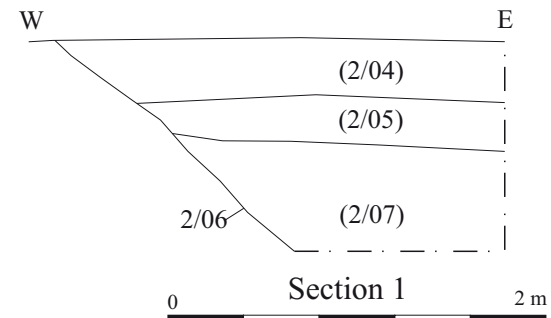
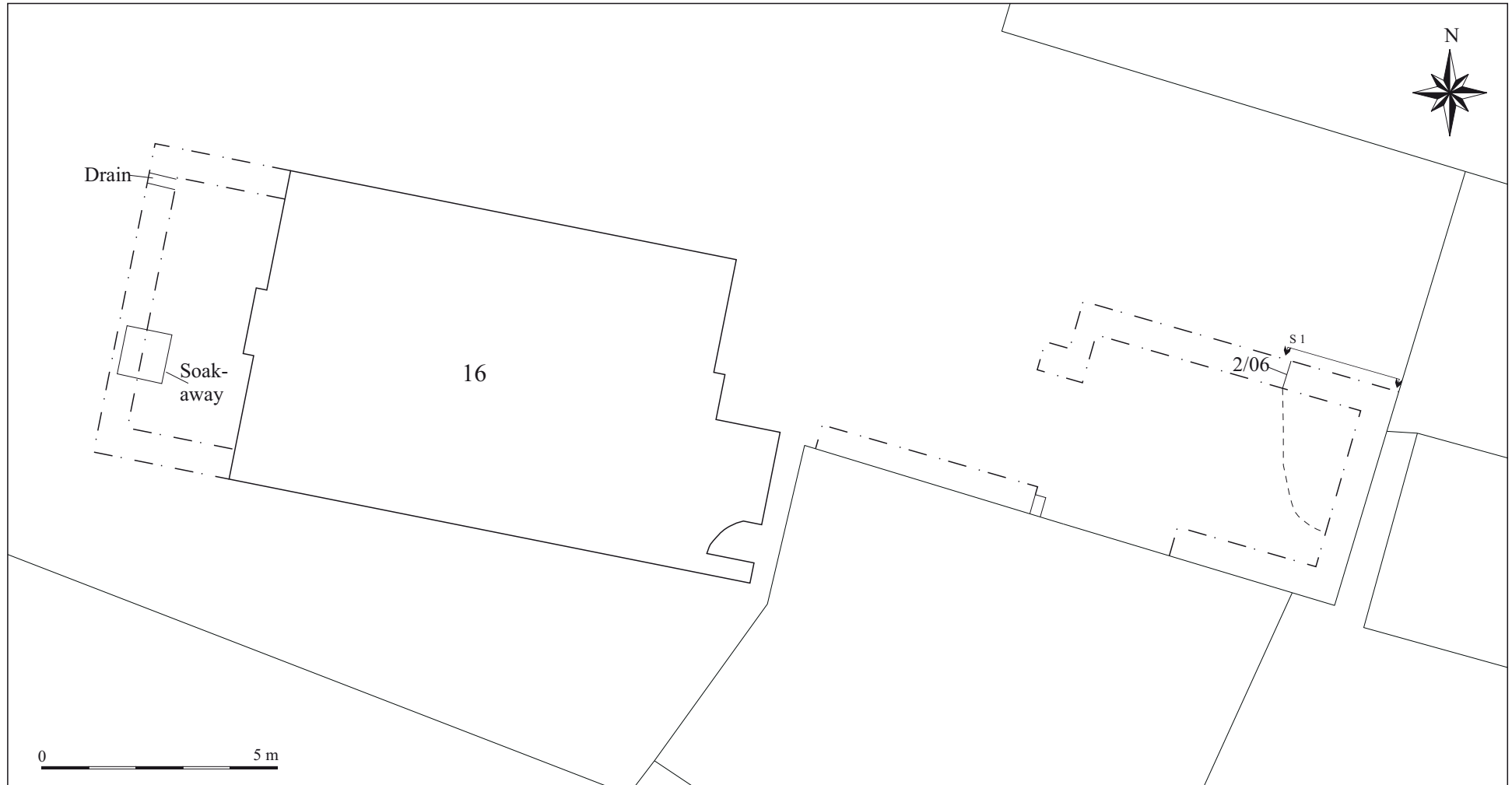


Figure 2. Plan and section

6 DISCUSSION

No significant archaeological features or deposits were recorded during the watching brief. Only early modern or modern features linked to drainage were observed.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Institute for Archaeologists 2008. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.

John Moore Heritage Services 2011. Written Scheme of Investigation: 16 Priest End, Thame. JMHS 2221/01.