



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF AT STABLE HOUSE, THE GREEN,  
BRILL, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HP18 9RU**

**NGR 65650 13737**

**By  
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***On behalf of***

***Mr C Scott MacKirdy***

**November 2011**

**REPORT FOR** Mr C Scott MacKirdy  
Stable House  
The Green  
Brill  
Buckinghamshire  
HP18 9RU

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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services conducted an archaeological watching brief during groundworks at Stable house, The Green, Brill, Buckinghamshire, HP18 9RU (Site Centred (NGR: SP 65650 13737) connected with a new garage, drive and associated walls (Planning Application Reference: 11/0053/APP). The excavations were generally very shallow and limited due to construction methodology employed. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered. Limited Post medieval pottery and tile was recovered from topsoil stripping (not retained).*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The site is located in on the south side of Church Street, Brill opposite the Red Lion public house at NGR SP 65650 13737. Geologically the site is situated on Whitchurch Sand Formation close to the junction with Purbeck Formation.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Aylesbury Vale District Council granted planning permission for erection of single storey garage. Due to the potential for archaeological remains to be present on the site a condition has been attached to the permission requiring the carrying out of an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the new construction. Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) issued a generic brief for a watching brief for this development site. A Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by JMHS, which outlined the method by which the archaeological watching brief would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance, followed the Brief.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

Brill is of considerable archaeological interest with evidence activity from early prehistory. Five Mesolithic blades were found at a property to the north (HER 0205300000; SP 6571 1379); a core came from the allotments to the west (HER 0247802000; SP 65515 13723). Iron Age occupation has been suspected adjacent to the church associated with an earthwork (HER 01060; NGR SP 6560 1389), which may be the remains of a hillfort rampart (Farley 1989), but is possibly later (JMHS 2005). Similarly, only limited Roman finds are known from Brill, which include two small coins 300m northwest (HER 05216; SP 6526 1393) of the proposal site.

In the late Saxon period, Brill was a royal manor and the centre of an estate, which may have had its origins in a pre-Saxon 'multiple estate' (Baines 1995). Brill was the most important settlement within the medieval forest of Bernwood, which was legally established following the Norman Conquest based upon the pre-existing woodland and a hunting lodge built by Edward the Confessor. Brill was the administrative centre for the forest and hundred with a royal house, fishponds, mills, church, prison-house, market and fair, claypits and kilns.

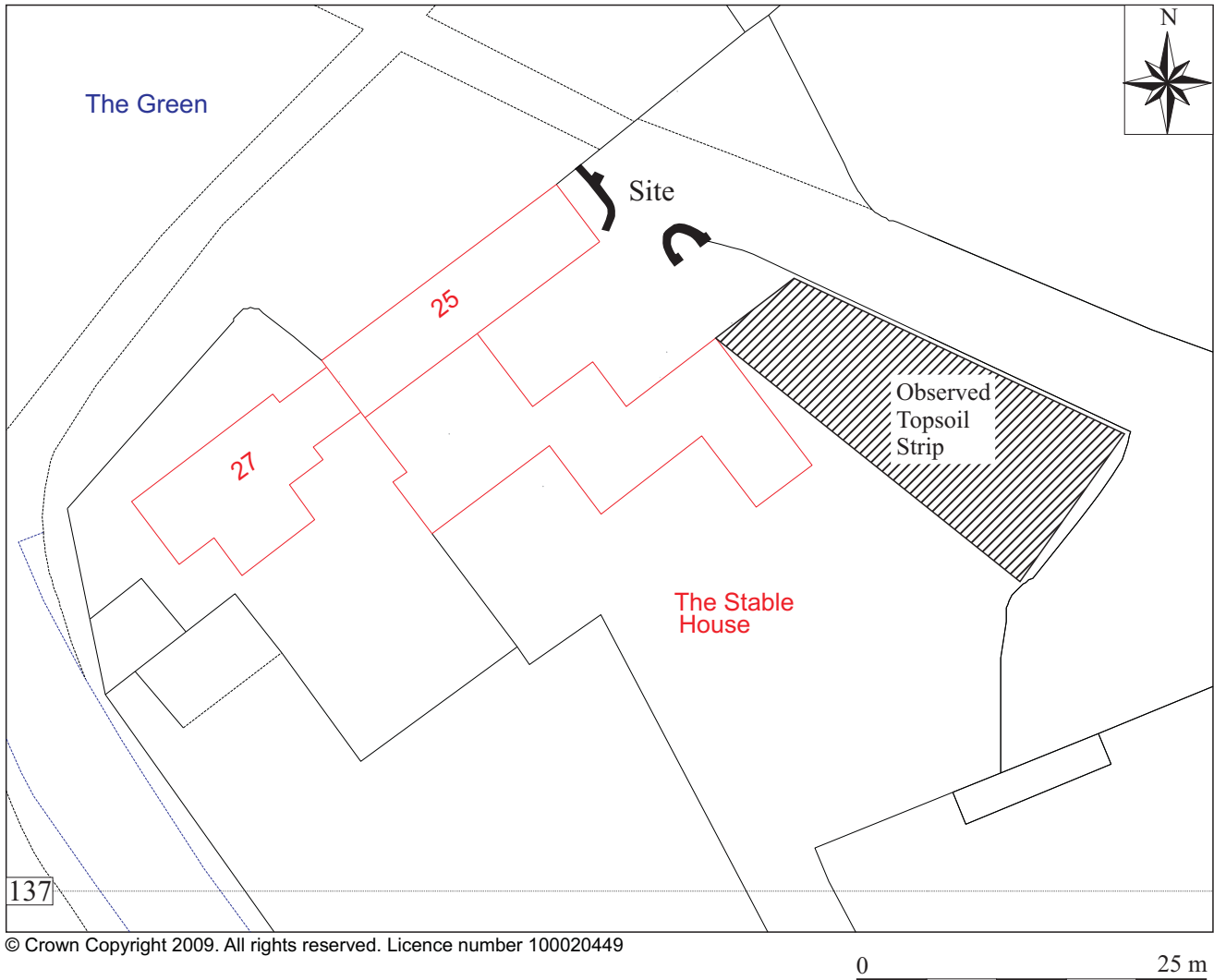
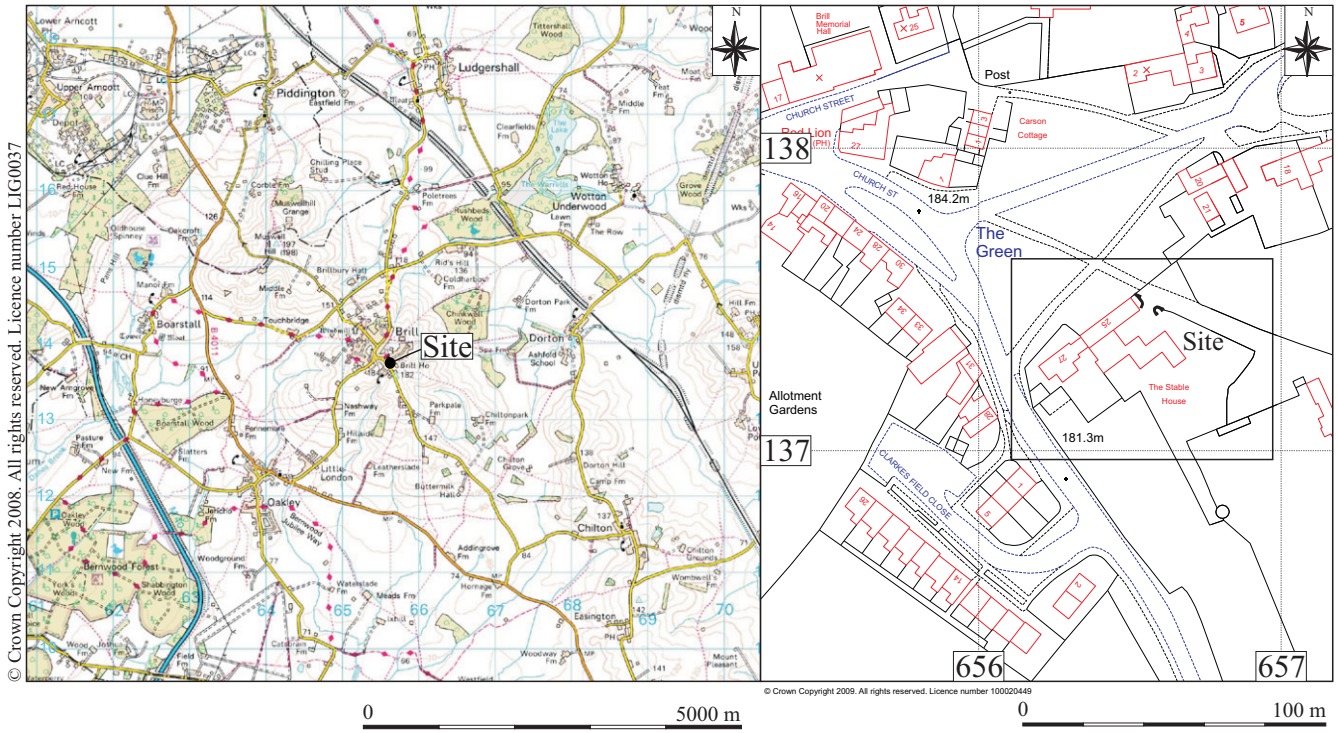


Figure 1. Site location

Brill answered for 20 hides in 1086 (Morris 1978, 1.6), with a population of 19 villans, 13 bordars and 2 slaves. There was a mill (probably water), meadow for 20 ploughs, and woodland for 200 pigs. The manor paid £38.

Accounts in the *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon* suggest that the Norman kings had a timber hunting lodge (HER 0231000000; SP 65500 14000) at Brill from the reign of William I, and that he and Henry I both visited. Various accounts indicate that the hunting lodge complex underwent periods of major renovation or construction between 1179 and 1247 in and around the earlier lodge. A master fossator (ditch digger) and other workmen accounted for the construction of a bank and ditch around the King's new chamber suggestive of the hunting lodge at Brill standing on or near that of the Norman kings (Yeates and Williams, *forthcoming*). The building prospered and grew with royal favour and the later parish church (HER0219200000; SP 6562 1385) may have functioned as a royal chapel to the palace. Royal presence had economic implications as under its patronage, the pottery industry may have been established by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Mellor 1994, 111). It was the centre of an important regional pottery and tile industry, which continued to be active into the post-medieval period when it also produced bricks (Harvey 1997). Evidence for the industry is found throughout Brill and medieval pottery is often found in conjunction with later brick, tile and pottery kilns (e.g. 0571200000; SP 6560 1408), indicating longevity and continuity of use.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries Brill was described as a borough but thereafter it went into decline and lost its status as a town. The manor was in royal hands until the 14<sup>th</sup> century (VCH 1927, 15), and between 1337 and 1634 it was held as one knight's fee. The manor was alienated from the Crown in 1337 and by 1340 granted to John de Moleyns and enfeoffed to a descendent William Moleyns by 1417. Three possible locations for the manor have been forwarded (Williams and Yeates, *forthcoming*). The first, by association with the Moleyns family, is that the present manor site is on that of the medieval hunting lodge, which is inferred from the VCH (1927, 15). Two further possibilities exist; secondly that it was in the vicinity of the first site but on the east side of the Oakley Road, suggested by an estate map of 1713 (updated in 1756 and 1763) which shows this location as the site of the manor (Bucks RO Ma/27/4T). Thirdly, that it was located to the south of the Green, where it is marked on the New College map of 1591 (Bucks RO MaR/5/2), which would locate it immediately adjacent to the proposal site. Metal finds from the medieval period to the 19<sup>th</sup> century have been found in fields to the west of the proposal site (MBC29192; MBC29524; MBC29537; MBC30639; MBC30604; MBC30749; MBC30753; MBC30754; all SP 65 13). To the east of the proposal site is Brill House (HER 1164400000; SP 65727 13705), which the Stable House was a part of (OS 1880, 1:10 560). To the east by northeast is a post-medieval well-house (HER 0249900000; SP 65830 13750). To the north at 15 The Green, JMHS carried out a watching brief, which identified undated features including an east/west aligned ditch (Fitzsimons 2010).

The manor of Brill descended with that of Stokes Prior until 1554 when Francis Earl of Huntingdon sold it to Thomas Dynham of Boarstall (VCH 1927, 16); Brill manor then descended with Boarstall manor. Custody of Brill Manor is known to have changed at various times; these are catalogued in the *Victoria County History*.

A mound considered to represent a Norman motte (HER 0052800000; SP 6550 1390) lies to the northwest of the proposal site. This is also recorded on the New College map of 1591.

Extensive remains of the medieval and post-medieval pottery, tile and brick industry are known in the village (Farley 1979). These are mainly in the central, west and north part of the village. Medieval pottery kilns include (HER 0505800000, SP 6593 1421; HER 0439400000, SP 6566 1427; HER 0057600000, SP 6564 1428; possible HER 0568100000, SP 6558 1425; HER 0529300000, SP 6552 1413; HER 0195000000, SP 6550 1390 and particularly HER 0247800000, SP 6548 1370). The last kiln site is *c.* 100m due east of the proposal site and comprised 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century pottery, including three wasters and two sherds with glaze over the fractures, indicative of a kiln site. The pottery is mostly jugs with some jar fragments. There were also possible 13<sup>th</sup> century jugs. A further site is located *c.* 100m to the east where pottery of 16<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> century date was found in a field survey suggesting the possibility of a kiln site (HER 0249900000, SP 6583 1380). Post-medieval pottery dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries was recovered during a recent watching brief at Penn Cottage, 20 Church Street, *c.* 100m northwest of the proposal site. The pottery recovered suggested the possibility of a local potter or kiln-owner's dwelling on the site (Williams 2009).

Post-medieval brick and tile works are known in the north of the village (HER 0465300000, SP 6562 1486 and HER 0419200000, SP 6555 4190). Pottery kilns of the post-medieval period occur near the centre of the village (HER 0529300000, SP 6552 1413; 0212900000, SP 5638 1407; 0215300000, SP 6548 1405).

An evaluation at the east end of Windmill Street, to the rear of the Sun Inn, produced traces of post-medieval pottery production, including dumps of clay, pottery wasters and kiln furniture (Murray 2001). An excavation undertaken by JMHS at 7-9 Temple St also recovered evidence for 16<sup>th</sup> century pottery production (Williams, *forthcoming*).

During the Civil War Brill was briefly garrisoned by Parliament during the winter of 1644.

The Solent Thames Historic Environment Resource Assessment for post-medieval Buckinghamshire has noted the heavy concentration of excavated pottery kilns at Brill. There is considerable research potential of this isolated industrial community to serve as a model for other early industrial settlements and settlement patterns in the region (Taylor-Moore and Dyer 2007; Green, Giggins and Welch 2007). Detailed investigation of the village might fill in the picture of the distribution of kilns through time and space. It would be interesting to know, for example, whether little Brill had an 'industrial quarter' as might be superficially suggested by the concentration of known sites in the northern half of the settlement. This pattern might usefully be related to known settlement patterns and evidence of the standards of living across the village through the study of pottery or other material (Green, Giggins and Welch 2007).

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

To identify and record any archaeological remains revealed by the groundworks by any ground reduction and excavation for the new foundations and any new services.

In particular to record any evidence of medieval or post-medieval occupation or evidence for the medieval and post-medieval pottery, brick and tile industry.

To determine the relationship between the building and its immediate environs, particularly Brill House.

### 3 STRATEGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

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 (1999) and the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

#### 3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of all excavations that could potentially disturb or destroy archaeological remains. This involved the observation of topsoil stripping and the excavation for new foundations of a garden wall and service runs.

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. A photographic record was produced.

### 4 RESULTS

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

#### 4.1 Excavation Results (Figure 2)

##### 4.1.1 The Topsoil Strip (Figure 1)

Topsoil stripping occurred to the east of the Stable House, over the area designed for a new driveway and garages (Figure 2; Plate 1). The excavations achieved a depth of only *c.* 0.05-0.10m and only Post medieval tile and pottery sherds were discovered within the topsoil (01) (not retained). At the northern end of the site a deposit (02) was seen beneath the topsoil with a high frequency of Post medieval tile and brick (not retained).

##### 4.1.2 The New Garden Walls (Figure 2)

###### *New Garden Wall 1*

The natural sand was the earliest deposit encountered (1/5=1/8) which was overlain by 0.04m thick yellow brown sandy clay (1/7). The next layer was 0.02m thick mid yellow brown silty sand (1/3) overlaid by 0.10-0.20m thick dark black brown silty sand (1/2) of modern origin. The latest deposit was the current driveway gravel (1/1).

A pit 1/6 was seen cut through (1/5), sealed by (1/3). It had a sub circular shape 0.60m depth and 1.04m wide with sharp sides and a flat base (Fig 2; Section 1 & 2). It was filled by dark yellow brown sandy silt (1/4) with frequent charcoal flecks and some Post medieval brick and glass (not retained).

###### *New Garden Wall 2*

The earliest layer observed was the natural sand (2/04), overlain by mid brown sandy loam



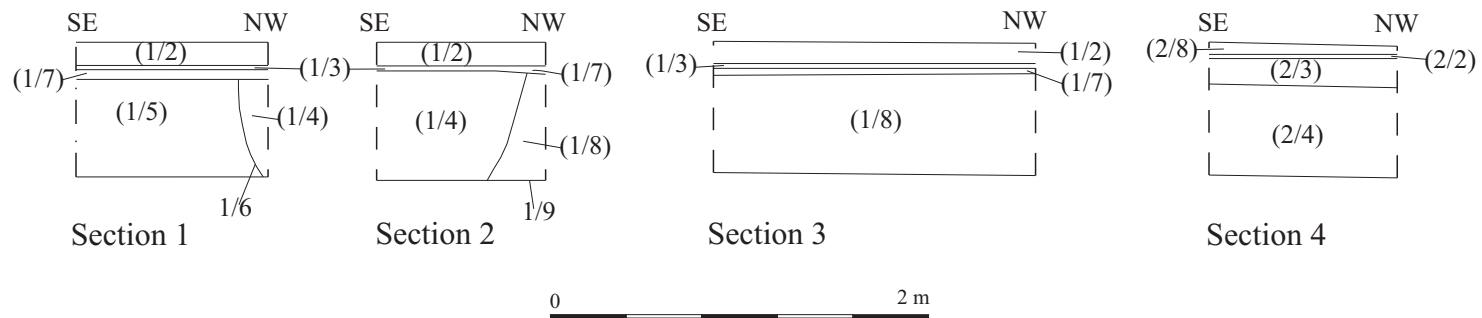
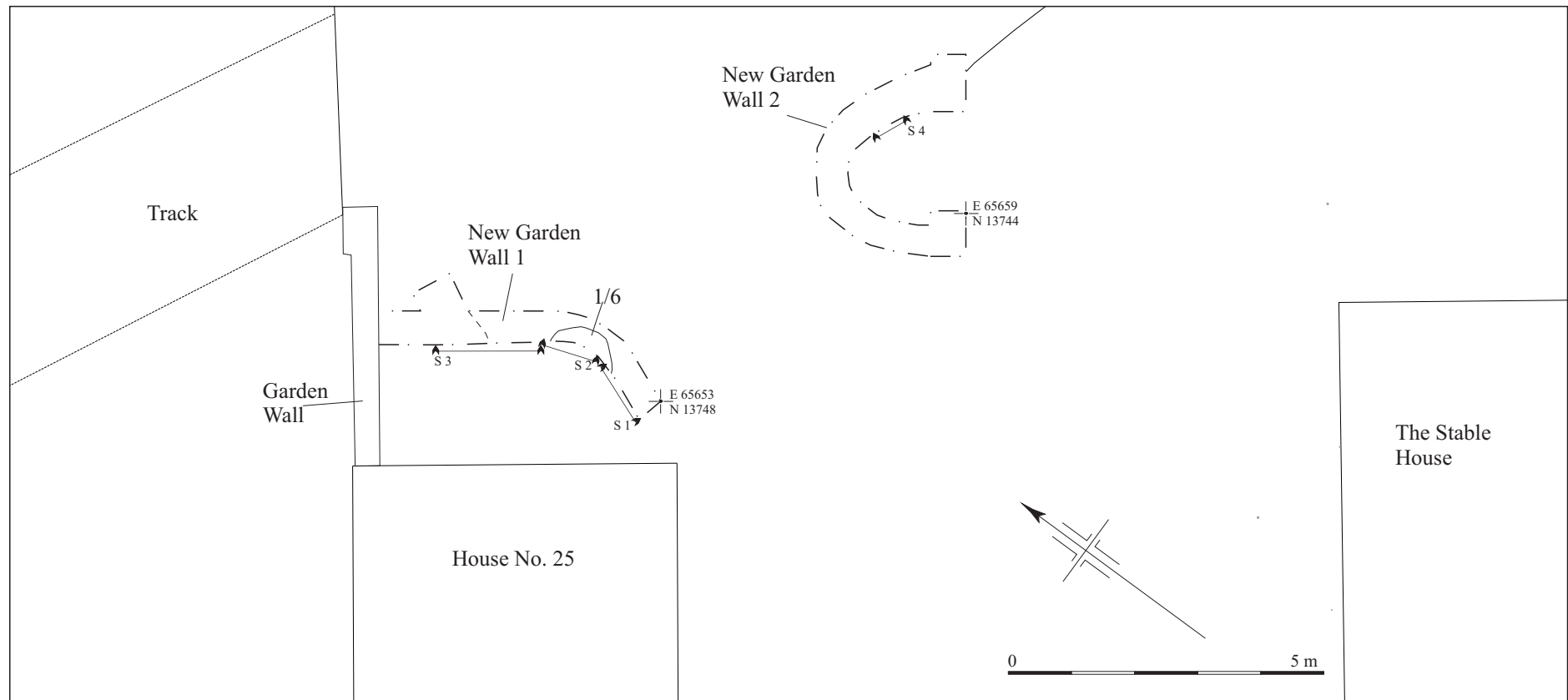


Figure 2. Areas Monitored Plan and Sections

with Post medieval brick and tile (2/3), sealed by modern asphalt (2/2), probably laid down as a previous driveway. The latest deposit was the existing driveway surface of gravels (2/1). No archaeological features or finds were discovered.

#### **4.1.3 The Reliability of Results**

The excavations at Stable House, Brill were generally very shallow and only where new garden walls were instated was the natural clay encountered. A confidence rating is high that the best possible results were achieved with full co-operation from the contractor (which is gratefully acknowledged).

### **5 FINDS**

A very small number (*c.* 2 sherds) of Post medieval pottery sherds were encountered during topsoil stripping from layer (01). Deposit (02) contained the most frequent amount of brick and tile probably associated with a dumped layer when Stable House was constructed.

No other finds were discovered of archaeological interest.

### **6 DISCUSSION**

The watching brief has enabled us to further investigate an area of Brill, which has not been subject to any previous archaeological study. The presence of medieval and Post medieval pottery kilns in the immediate area indicate this part of Brill may have also been used for this purpose. The scant evidence of pottery and tile production recovered from the topsoil would indicate that although manufacture was taking place in the town, it is unlikely to have been produced at this site. In addition to this negative evidence, within the vicinity of a pottery kiln archaeologists expect to find 'wasters', a distinctive type of pottery sherd made in the manufacture process. There were no wasters recovered from this site.

The excavations were very limited and their 'keyhole' nature make interpretation difficult. The main area of the site involved a very shallow ground reduction of just 0.05-0.10m depth meaning archaeological features and finds may still be preserved beneath the remaining overburden.

A confidence rating is high that the best possible results were achieved.

### **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

English Heritage 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*

Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA). 1994. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Archaeological Watching Brief*

JMHS 2011 The Stable House, The Green, Brill; Archaeological Watching Brief; Written Scheme of Investigation. Unpub JMHS Doc.

BCAS 2010 Generic brief for archaeological watching brief at The Stable House, The Green, Brill, Buckinghamshire.



Plate 1: General; Topsoil strip looking north.

**HER Summary Form**

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Site Name: The Stable House, The Green, Brill, Buckinghamshire</b>   |                            |
| <b>Site Address:</b><br><b>The Stable House, The Green, Brill, Buckinghamshire</b>  |                            |
| <b>Summary:</b><br><i>John Moore Heritage Services concluded an archaeological watching brief during groundworks at Stable house, The Green, Brill, Buckinghamshire, HP18 9RU (Site Centred (NGR: SP 65650 13737) connected with a new garage (Planning Application Reference: 11/0053/APP). The excavations were generally very shallow and limited due to construction methodology employed. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered. Limited Post medieval pottery and tile was recovered from topsoil stripping (not retained).</i> |                            |
| <b>District/Unitary: Oxford City</b>  | <b>Parish:</b>             |
| <b>Period(s):</b><br>Post med/ Modern   |                            |
| <b>NGR (centre of site: 8 figures):</b><br>SP 65650 13737   |                            |
| <b>Type of archaeological work: Watching Brief</b>  |                            |
| <b>Date of Recording: 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> &amp; 25<sup>th</sup> October 2011</b>   |                            |
| <b>Unit undertaking recording: JMHS</b>   |                            |
| <b>Geology: Sand</b>  |                            |
| <b>Title and author of accompanying report:</b><br><br><b>An Archaeological Watching Brief at The Stable House, The Green, Brill, Buckinghamshire</b><br><br>Prepared by Paul Riccoboni BA ARCH AIFA  |                            |
| <b>Summary of fieldwork results (begin with earliest period first, add NGRs where appropriate)</b><br><br><b>Modern</b><br><br><b>(cont. on attached sheet)</b>   |                            |
| <b>Location of archive/finds:</b>   |                            |
| <b>Contact at Unit: :</b><br><i>Paul Riccoboni</i><br><i>info@jmheritageservices.co.uk</i>  | <b>Date: November 2011</b> |