



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
MONKS MEDE, BURTON LANE,
MONKS RISBOROUGH, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

NGR: SP 8122 0430

On behalf of

Mr & Mrs A Sparkes

JUNE 2013

REPORT FOR	Mr Alan Sparkes Monks Mede Burton Rd Monks Risborough Buckinghamshire HP27 9JF
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Summary

A watching brief was undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services during ground works for a new build at Monks Mede, Burton Lane, Monks Risborough, Buckinghamshire (SP 8122 0430). The site has planning permission for the erection of a detached 3 bed dwelling and detached single garage with double car port, access via driveway to Monks Mede and erection of new driveway and parking area (12/05330/FUL). A total of four site visits were made intermittently during 17th-21st January 2013 and one visit to inspect the service trench during May 2013. Following the initial topsoil stripping, all of the wall footing trenches and service runs were monitored.

The archaeological features were mainly undated and comprised of three discrete features and two ditches. The ditch originally discovered in the evaluation trench was further examined and an additional larger ditch was encountered at the far western end of the excavations with one sherd of medieval pottery recovered on the surface of its fill. The large quarry pit was also further examined in the excavations for the new garage and one animal bone was recovered from the trench section. A confidence rating is high that the best possible results were achieved.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location and topography (Fig. 1)

The site is located in the garden of Monks Mede, Burton Lane, Monks Risborough (NGR SP 8122 0430). The underlying geology is Chalk Marl (BGS 237). The site is currently in domestic use.

1.2 Planning Background

Wycombe district Council has granted planning permission for the erection of a detached 3 bed dwelling and detached single garage with double car port (12/05330/FUL). Due to the presence of archaeological remains discovered during an evaluation by John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS 2012) Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) issued a Generic Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief. This was followed by a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2012) which outlined the method by which the archaeological work would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The manor of Monks Risborough was granted to the monastery of Christchurch, Canterbury, at an early date. In 995 Ethelred II confirmed a grant of the manor made by Archbishop Sigeric to Bishop Æscwige of Dorchester for 90 'librae' of pure silver and 200 'mancusae.' In the next year, however, Æscwige restored the manor, which apparently was only granted as security for the loan of money. It was confirmed to Christchurch by King Ethelred in 1006, and by Edward the Confessor. During the reign of the latter it was held by Asgar the Staller, with the condition that he could not alienate it from the Church.

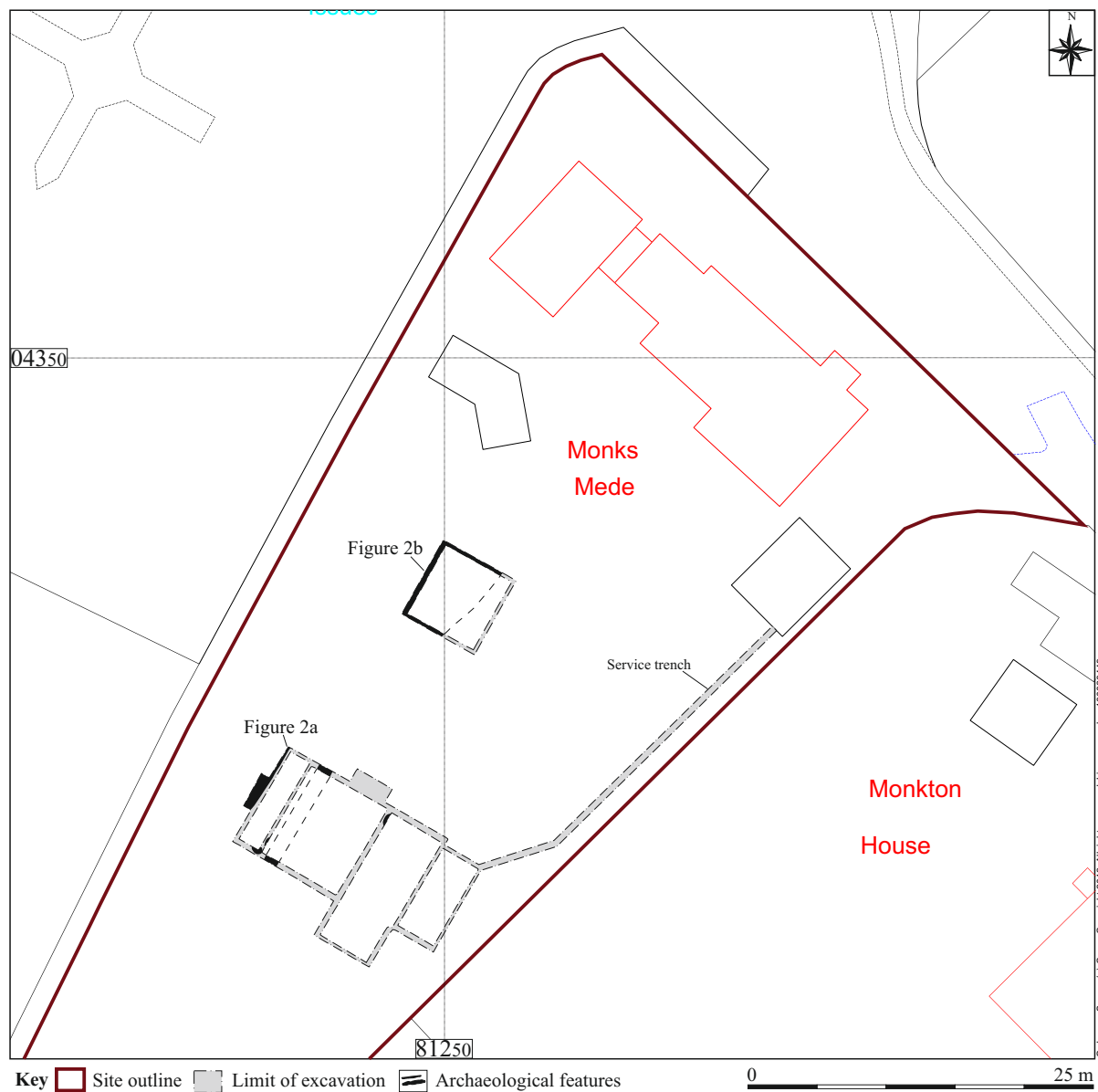
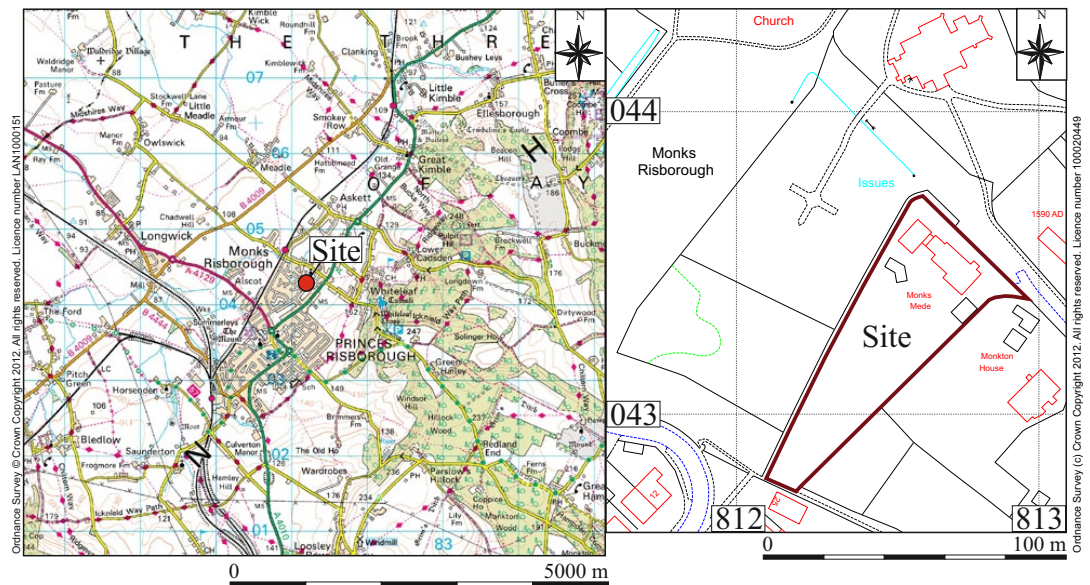


Figure 1. Site location

At Domesday (Williams & Martin 1992) Monks Risborough was held by the 'Archbishop himself' as the lands of the prior had not been separated from those of the archbishop. By the 13th century the manor was held by the Prior of Canterbury.

The monastery held the manor without interruption until it was seized by the Crown at the Dissolution. It was not restored by him to the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church, but was granted in 1541 to Sir Francis Bryan and Thomas Lawe. In the same year, however, these grantees obtained licence to alienate the manor to Edward Restwold and his wife Agnes (Page 1908).

The earliest map of the area consulted is a Parish map of 1831 (CRO IR/M8/8) this shows the area as field. The Inclosure award of 1839 (CRO IR/94Q) describes the field as "farm, homestead and garden". In 1908 there were 1,128³/₄ acres of arable land and 830¹/₂ of permanent pasture, with extensive watercress beds near the village.

Limited prehistoric activity is noted in the area; a barbed and tanged arrowhead (MBC 21133) was found *c.* 500m to the southwest. The Neolithic barrow at Whiteleaf Hill is approximately 1km to the southeast.

Just to the south of the A4010 a cropmark (MBC6261) was recognised that could represent a Roman enclosure. The field directly to the north was the subject of an evaluation (EBC 16507) prior to a proposed cemetery extension. This located artefacts associated with a Roman building (MBC 26642) which previously occupied the site. Roman tile (MBC 21680) was also discovered just to the west of this during earlier building works.

Late Saxon boundary ditches (MBC 26643) were also located during the evaluation to the south-west of the site (EBC 16507) (Mumford 2004). The site is presumed to be located close to the centre of the historic village (MBC 24642). The Grade I listed Church of St Dunstan (MBC 12112) lies just to the northeast and its churchyard (MBC 12114) borders the development site to the north.

The Benedictine monastery (MBC 950) was located to the north of St Dunstons Church and is marked on the 1st Edition OS map. Associated earthworks (MBC 951 & 952) were recorded in the 19th century, these are not visible today.

A 14th-century watermill (MBC 950) was recorded *c.* 500m to the north of the development site. Also in the vicinity are undated fishponds (MBC 21939), which are medieval or later. A 16th-century pottery kiln is also recorded in the area (MBC 7553).

The archaeological evaluation by John Moore Heritage Services (Williams 2012) at the site identified a quarry pit, a late medieval/early post-medieval wall base, undated postholes and a ditch, thought to be a continuation of the ditch observed in 2004 on the adjacent site (Mumford 2004).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

To record any archaeological remains that will be impacted on by the development with particular regard to the possibility of Roman and medieval remains being present.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994), the Buckinghamshire Archaeology *Generic Brief* and John Moore Heritage Services *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2012).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during all ground reduction connected to the new building. All ground reduction was achieved using a combination of 360° tracked excavator fitted with a ditching bucket.

A journal, recorded on specially designed record sheets, was maintained which detailed times and durations of site visits as well as notes on areas monitored by the archaeologist. Deposits (overburden) were recorded on context recording sheets. A general photographic record of the work was kept and will form of the part site archive.

4 RESULTS

Individual context numbers were assigned on site to deposits encountered during the ground reduction. Context numbers in () indicate deposits of material.

4.1 Field Results (Fig.1; Fig. 2)

General Overburden

The overburden across the site consisted of the following deposits (earliest to latest). The natural Chalk Marl was at the base of the excavations (103). The natural was overlain by subsoil (101) c. 0.20m thick and topsoil (100). Within the north-western corner of the house plot was dark brownish grey silty clay layer (102).

4.1.1 The New House (Fig. 1; Fig. 2)

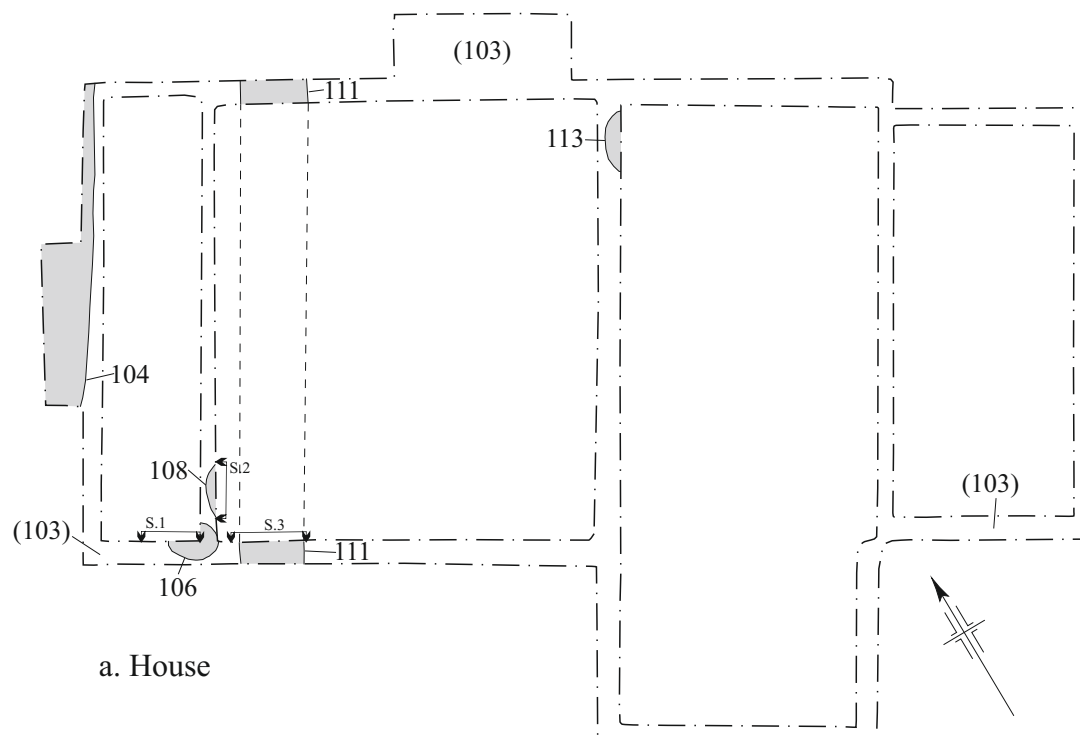
Ditches; cut into natural (103)

Ditch 104 was located at the far western end of the excavations orientated on an approximate north-south direction with concave sides and unknown base. It was filled by dark greyish silty clay (105) with one sherd of medieval pottery on the upper surface of the fill. The excavations did not fully impact the ditch so a full profile was not obtained. In addition the ditch was only partially visible within the trench (Plate 2). The ditch was sealed by subsoil (101).

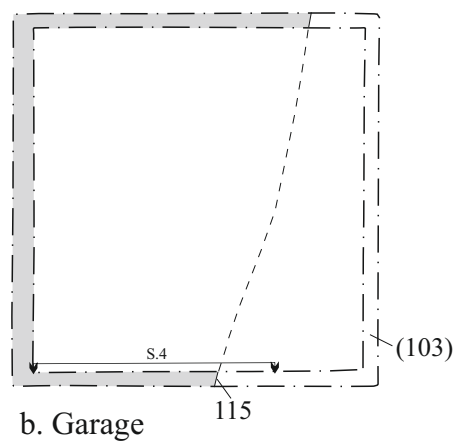
Ditch 111 was orientated on a north-south direction 1.10m wide and 0.56m deep with sharp concave sides and a gently rounded base (Plate 3). It was filled by friable dark brown grey silty clay with no recovered finds (112). The ditch was sealed by subsoil (101).

Pits; cut into natural (103)

Pit 106 was c. 0.40 wide (min) and 0.50m deep with concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by light-mid brownish grey silty clay (107) with no finds.



a. House



b. Garage

Key  Archaeological features

0  5 m

Figure 2. Plans

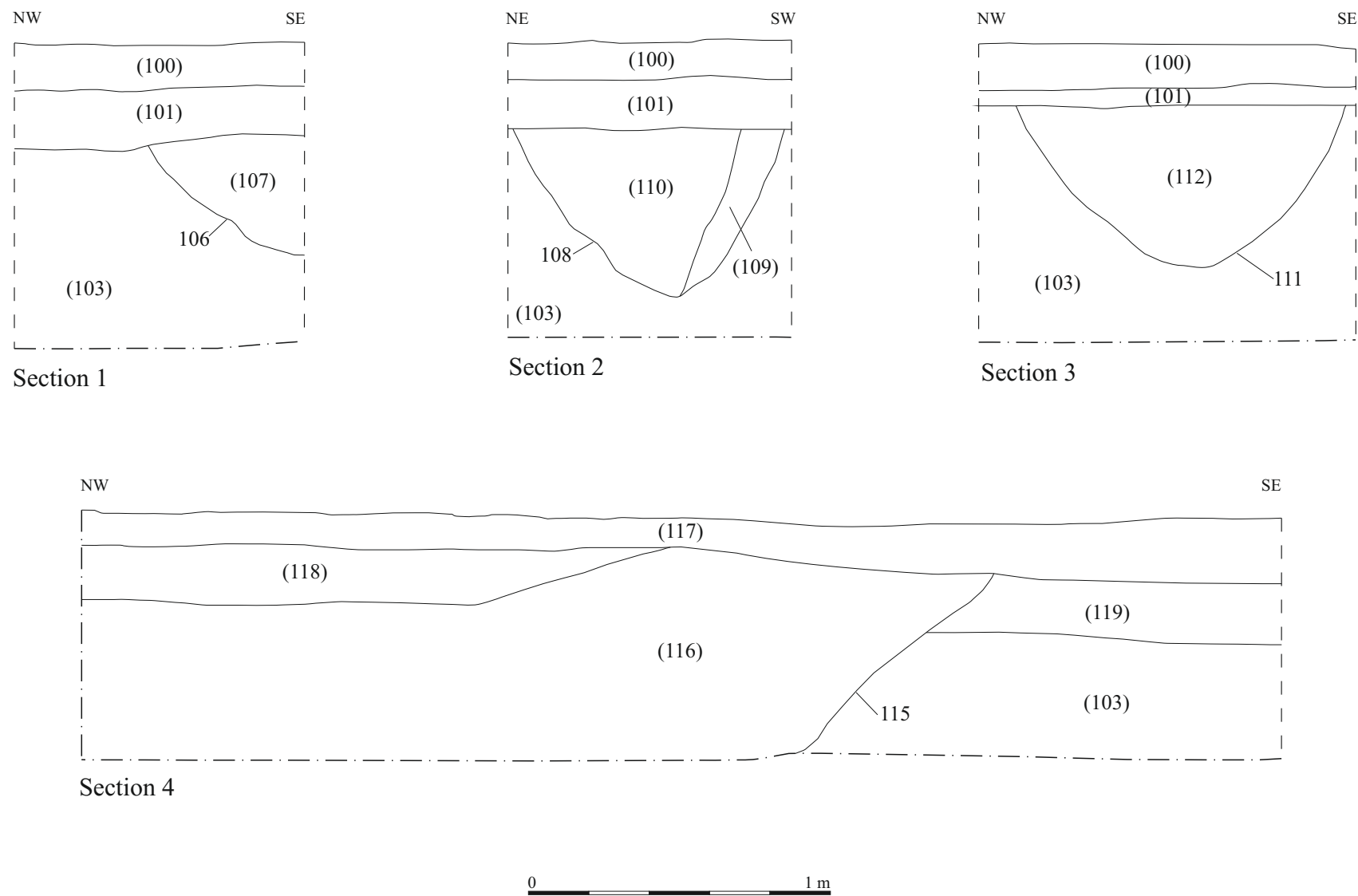


Figure 3. Sections

Pit 108 was 0.90m wide and 0.58m deep with concave sides and a gently rounded base. It was filled by two fills, the earliest was firm mid creamy grey silty clay (109) on the eastern side of the pit. The latest fill was dark brownish grey silty clay 0.72m wide and 0.50m with no recovered finds (110).

Pit 113 was recorded in section only 0.80m wide and 0.40 deep. It was bowl shaped with concave sides and a gently rounded base. The pit was filled by friable mid brownish grey silty clay (114). All pit features were sealed by subsoil (101).

4.1.2 The New Garage (Fig. 1; Fig. 2)

The stratigraphic sequence across the new garage was similar to that of the new house plot. The earliest deposit encountered was the natural chalk marl (103). Overlying this was subsoil (119)=(101) and topsoil (117)=(100).

The new garage excavations revealed the quarry pit 115 first identified in the archaeological evaluation. The footing trenches revealed that the pit was probably sub oval in shape with a sharp concave eastern side cut through subsoil (101). During the evaluation the depth for the quarry pit was tested reaching a minimum depth of 1.2m from ground level. The pit was filled by dark greyish brown silty clay (116) which contained an animal jaw bone. No dating evidence was recovered. The latest fill of the quarry pit was 0.20m thick mid creamy grey marly chalk backfill (118) seen across the western half of the excavations. This was sealed by topsoil (100).

4.1.3 The Service Trench (Fig. 1)

The service trench was excavated to a length of *c.* 20m and depth of *c.* 0.70m from existing ground surface (Plate 4). The trench was inspected for archaeological features and finds. As a result no archaeological features could be ascertained and no finds were recovered. The trench was narrow and the attending archaeologist said identification of archaeological features in such a trench was difficult, but gave a confidence rating of medium to high that there were no archaeological features present.

4.2 Reliability of Results

The watching brief was carried out in snowy conditions with good co-operation from the contractor carrying out the groundworks. The site was stripped of topsoil on arrival which would explain the lack of any building materials and medieval pottery when compared with the evaluation (Plate 1).

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

5 THE FINDS

5.1 The Pottery by Jane Timby

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of a single piece of pottery from the uppermost fill of a ditch (105). The sherd is part of an everted rim with a thickened edge from a plain jar/cooking pot. It has a gre-black, dense sandy fabric with black

surfaces. The edges are moderately fresh; weight 18g. Date: Medieval (later 12th -14th century).

6 DISCUSSION

The archaeological watching brief was a useful addition to the previous discoveries within the evaluation trenches (Williams 2012).

A large north-south ditch 104 was partially uncovered but was not sectioned as it was not fully impacted on by the new footing trench. Although the ditch was only partially revealed in the section it can be discerned that it was at least 1m wide. One sherd of medieval pottery was found during trowling over the upper surface of the fill providing a *terminus post quem* for when the ditch silted up. On the adjacent site (Mumford 2004) a large ditch was uncovered thought to be a boundary ditch aligned north-west south –east. It contained 10th century pottery and residual Roman building material. Another north-south boundary ditch was discovered in Trench 2 (Mumford 2004) which was 2.4m wide and 0.80m deep. It also contained 10th century pottery with residual Roman building material. The large ditch discovered at Monks Mede was later in date and may represent the continuing use of an existing 10th century enclosure in the high medieval period. This enclosure does not seem to have extended as far north as at the site of the proposed new church hall (Coles & Hammond 2002).

At the time of the conquest Monks Risborough was a substantial rural settlement complex. There would have been ditched boundaries around the most important buildings or ditches may have defined areas such as a minster ditch around a church. Some of the ditches in this area of Monks Risborough although may have had Roman origin, probably continued in use or were adapted during the medieval period.

Ditch 111 originally discovered during the evaluation was further examined with two more sections across it. No dating was recovered which was unfortunate as none was recovered from the evaluation. Therefore the potential connection with the ditches from the adjacent evaluation (Mumford 2004, 8) cannot be assumed, only indicated (Williams 2012).

This ditch should have crossed the area of the new garage, but was entirely removed by the quarry pit. Postholes were discovered across the area of the new garage during the evaluation, but no additional postholes were seen during the watching brief.

The other discrete features adjacent to ditch 111 were probably postholes, perhaps marking the edge of the ditch or maybe forming a fence line along the ditch if it was once a boundary. Feature 113 may have been a general waste pit.

The service trench which traversed close to the site boundary did not contain any obvious archaeological features, although the narrowness of the trench made spotting archaeological features difficult.

Although the watching brief was modest in archaeological features and finds, if linked with adjacent sites and those of the wider landscape it ties in well to provide additional archaeological information to this important part of Saxon Monks Risborough.

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

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 Find

The archive is currently maintained by John Moore Heritage Services.

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Plate 1; Showing site stripped of topsoil before footing excavation



Plate 2; Ditch 104 looking south



Plate 4; Service trench looking south-west



Plate 3; Ditch 111 looking northwest

