



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRIP, MAP AND RECORD**

**AT MERIDEN COURT,**

**WALLINGFORD,**

**OXFORDSHIRE**

**NGR SU 6028 8920**

*On behalf of*

*Beres Developments*

**APRIL 2013**

**REPORT FOR** Beres Developments  
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## **Summary**

*A strip, map and record conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation of footings trenches revealed a number of undated postholes, pits and a ditch, which might be associated with the adjacent Anglo-Saxon remains previously revealed during watching briefs, as well as two modern pits associated with the site's former use as garaging.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The development site is 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. The site was formerly in use as garages, which had been demolished prior to groundworks starting.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Planning permission was granted by South Oxfordshire District Council for the development of four dwellings with associated private gardens and parking spaces at Meriden Court, Wallingford (P12/S2328/FUL). Due to the potential presence of and disturbance to archaeological remains a condition required an archaeological programme of works be carried out during the period of groundworks. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services prepared a Brief for the work.

### **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.* AD 900.

A Saxon inhumation cemetery is recorded 170m to the south-east of the site which was excavated as a number of sites (PRN 7791, SU 6043 8907).

While the site is 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 recent watching brief at 2 Norman Way 120m west failed to find anything of significance.

Recent development in the immediate vicinity recorded a number of pits and possible ditches, some of which are tentatively dated to the Saxon period. A watching brief on

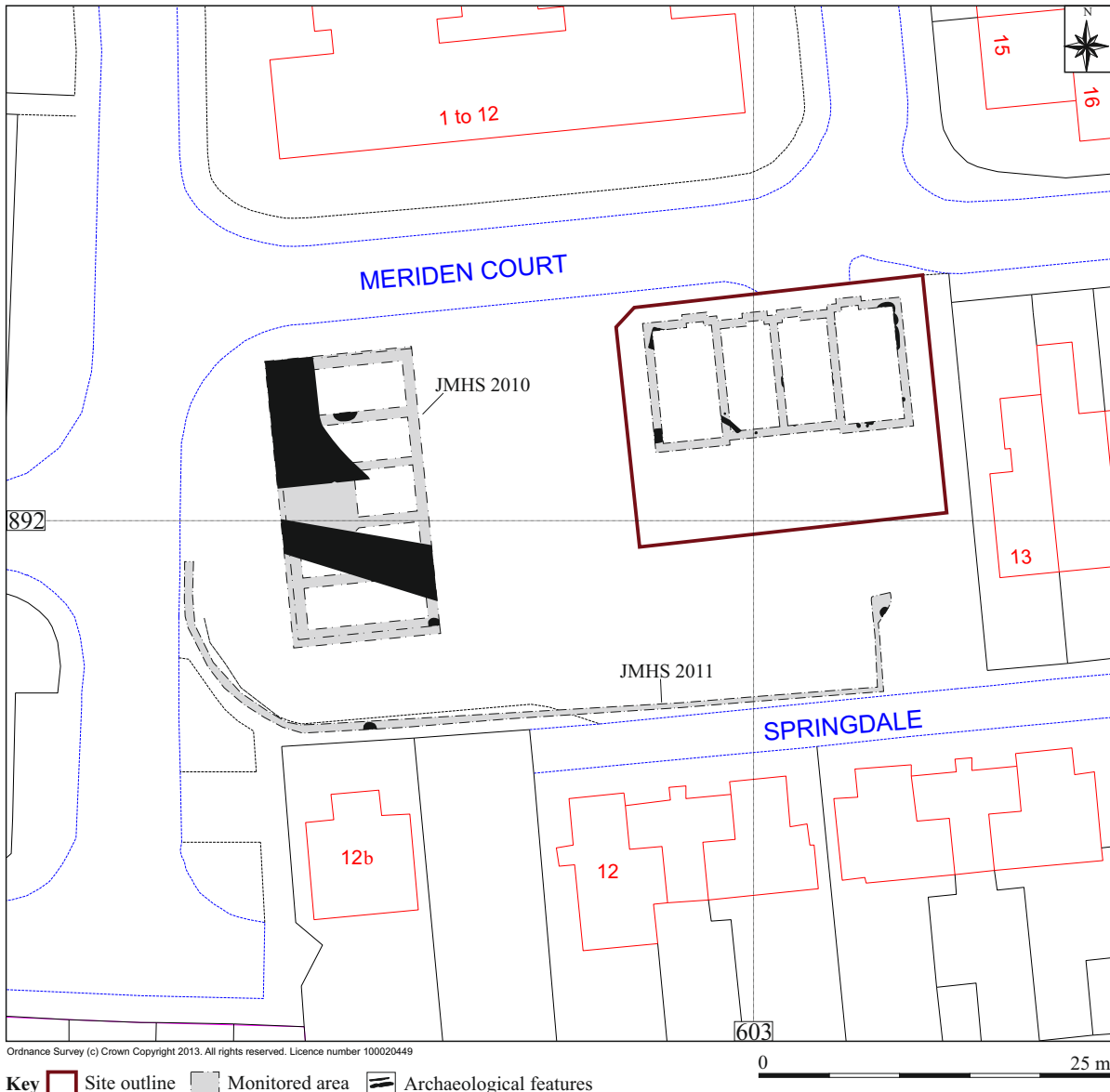
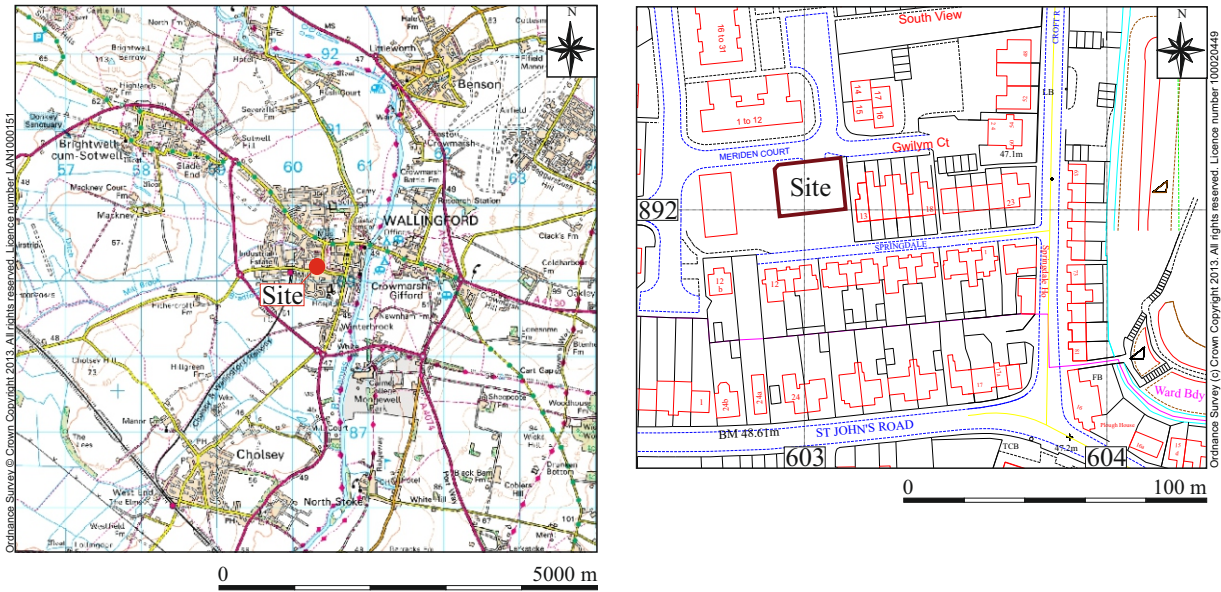


Figure 1. Site location

an associated service trench also recorded a Saxon pit (PRN 27465) (Riccoboni 2011; Winnett 2012).

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

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

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

The results of the investigations will be made public.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services. 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 (1994).

### **3.2 Methodology**

Site reduction and excavation for the new foundations were monitored. The topsoil and subsoil was removed to the appropriate level using a 5-tonne 360°, in close association with the developers. Archaeological remains were excavated and recorded where direct impact on them occurred.

## **4 RESULTS (Figure 2)**

All features were assigned individual context numbers. A general description of the feature fills is given. Although the majority of the features were undated, they can be grouped into early and modern. The early features were filled with leached slightly humic silty sand, whereas the modern features, undoubtedly associated with the preceding garages were filled with darker soil containing batteries, modern ironwork and smelt of diesel. The ground reduction was extremely limited, with the result that no archaeological remains were revealed in plan apart from within the footings trenches, the outcome of which is that it is not possible to determine the layout or function of the features investigated.

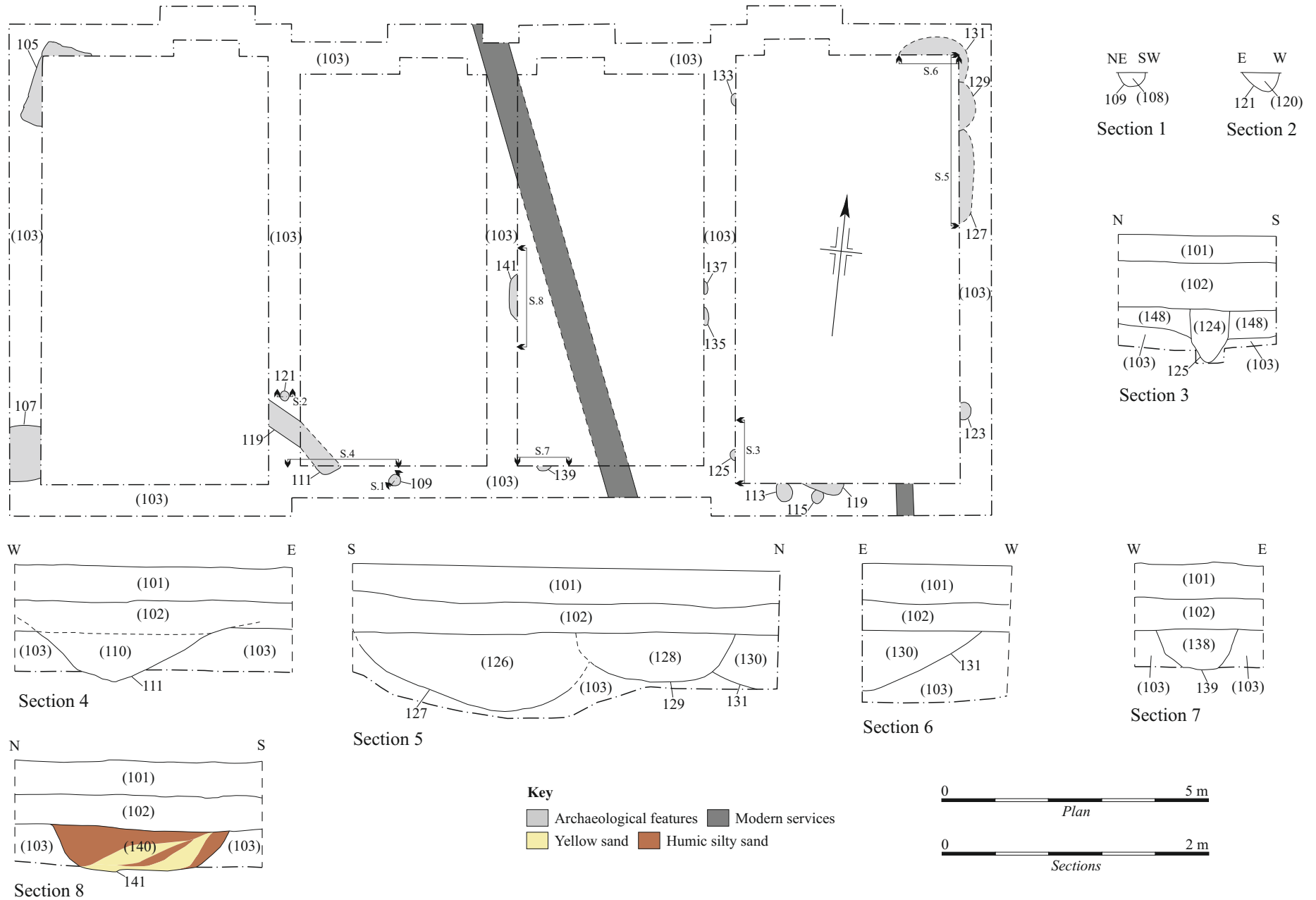


Figure 2. Plan and sections

#### 4.1 Field Results

The natural gravel (103) was exposed in all the footing trenches. The trenches revealed 10 postholes, two pits and a gully, all of which were undated. A further four modern features, including two service trenches, were also revealed (Fig. 2).

The postholes were spread across the intervention area measuring between 0.2m and 0.6m in diameter and up to 0.4m deep. The fills were mid to dark brown slightly humic silty sand (Table 1). The cut 118 was a heavily disturbed animal hole, but which might have originally been a posthole; in the context of the limited view afforded in the strip, map and record, it was not possible to be absolutely certain.



Figure 3. Postholes 109 and 121

Potential lines to form a structure exist: postholes 109, 139, 125 and 123, which might be within a postulated line, with 121 at the western extent (Fig. 3). Equally, these postholes may represent a fenceline. It is of note that the posthole 125 was clearly cut through a deposit of red brown sandy silt (148), which represents a soil horizon, the full implications of which were not appreciable within the 0.6m wide footing trench. Similarly, there is a potential line comprising postholes 125, 135 and 137. Again, it is not possible to assert with absolute confidence whether this represents a building or a fenceline. This only increases the difficulty of fully understanding the postholes 113, 115 and potentially 119.

| Cut |                                       | Fill |                                  |
|-----|---------------------------------------|------|----------------------------------|
| 109 | Round, concave base; 200×200×>100     | 108  | Soft dark brown-grey sandy silt  |
| 113 | Sub-round, concave base; 300×400×>100 | 112  | Friable mid brown-red silty sand |
| 115 | Round, concave base; 250×250×>100     | 114  | Friable mid brown silty sand     |
| 121 | Round, concave base; 250×250×>100     | 120  | Soft dark brown sandy silt       |
| 123 | Round, concave base; 250×250×>100     | 122  | Soft dark brown sandy silt       |
| 125 | Round, concave base; 250×250×400      | 124  | Friable dark brown sandy silt    |
| 133 | Round, concave base; 300×400×250      | 132  | Friable brown red sandy silt     |
| 135 | Round, concave base; 300×400×300      | 134  | Soft brown sandy silt            |
| 137 | Round, concave base; 300×400×300      | 136  | Friable red brown sandy silt     |
| 139 | Round, concave base; 600×600×320      | 138  | Friable dark brown sandy silt    |

Table 1. Postholes

Ditch 111 was the same as ditch 119 to the northwest. It was filled with dark brown sandy silt (110)/(118). The upper part of the fill was not easily distinguished from the overlying buried soil horizon (102). If contemporary with the line of postholes 109, 139, 125 and 135, it may well be part of an enclosure. The postulated building



represented by the postholes does not work well with the ditch 111 being contemporary.

In the centre and on the north-eastern side of the intervention area, there was evidence of pitting. The pit 141, in the centre of the development area, measured 1.4m by more than 0.2m across and was 0.035m deep. Tiplines were clearly visible, comprising mid to dark brown humic silty sand and 'cleaner' bands of friable yellow silty sand (140). The function of the pit could not be ascertained.

In the northeast corner there were three intercutting pits: 127 and 131, both of which were cut by the pit 129. The pit 127 (Fig. 4) measured more than 1.7m by more than 0.3m across and was 0.6m deep, and filled with dark brown silty sand (126). The pit 131 was located to the north was at least 0.8m by 0.4m and 0.4m deep, filled with red brown sandy silt (130). The later pit 129 which measured 1.3m by more than 0.3m and was 0.35m deep, was filled with mottled brown and yellow sandy silt (128). No finds were recovered from any of the pits.



*Figure 4. Pit 127*

The buried soil horizon – a mid red brown sandy silt (102) – sealed all the early features.

In the northwest corner of the intervention area was the square-sided pit 105 filled with dark grey brown sandy silt and batteries, car parts and other modern rubbish (104); to the south of this was the sub-rounded pit 107, filled with black sandy silt and batteries, car parts and other modern rubbish (106). Both are undoubtedly related to the site's use as garaging since the 1960s.

Sealing the pits was a layer of crush (101) which formed a base layer for the previous concreted garage area.

## 4.2 Reliability of Results

The intervention was carried out in reasonably clement conditions with good co-operation from the developer's on-site team and the results are felt to be representative.

## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Finds

No finds were recovered during the archaeological intervention.

### 5.2 Environmental Remains

No samples were taken as the quality of deposits was not felt sufficient to warrant sampling.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The intervention at Meriden Court yielded evidence of postholes, pits and a large gully or small ditch. All the remains were undated. It is probable however that the majority if not all are associated with the Saxon features previously revealed to the west in the first phase of Meriden Court (Winnett 2012) and, potentially, to the south in the service trench excavated when Scottish & Southern Electric connected the first phase of development to the grid (Riccoboni 2010).

The relationships between the previously reported Saxon activity and the present site are not readily apparent. It must be assumed that the undated features are potentially Saxon, although clearly cannot be proved to be such. In the event that the postholes, pits and ditches are contemporary with the dated remains, then it would appear that the site most recently investigated is enclosed by the ditches seen to the west (Winnett 2012), which were not seen in the service trench. A break in the ditch could easily explain the absence.

The present site appears to represent an area of settlement, possibly domestic, comprising buildings, although as noted above the postholes and narrow ditch on the south and southwest side of the investigation area might equally indicate internal subdivisions consisting of the gully with fencelines at right angles forming paddocks or similar small animal enclosures.

Unfortunately the total absence of dating means that it is not possible to be certain about the form, function or period of the remains encountered.

## 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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