

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

18 THE GREEN,

BRILL, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

NGR SP 65725 13804

*On behalf of
Mr. & Mrs. Shaw*

AUGUST 2014

REPORT FOR Mr. & Mrs. Shaw
18 The Green
Brill
Buckinghamshire
HP18 9RU

PREPARED BY Mark Woodley

ILLUSTRATION BY Autumn Robson

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

Tel: 01865 358300

Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk

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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief on the 15th May 2014. A small pit, a demolition layer and an unidentified cut feature were observed and recorded.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

This site is located at 18 The Green, Brill. This is a grade II listed dwelling located within the conservation area. It is at the west end of a terrace of three listed properties on the south side of The Green at NGR SP 65725 13804. The underlying geology comprises Whitchurch Sandstone bedrock.

1.2 Planning Background

Aylesbury Vale District Council has granted planning permission for the conversion of existing part of outbuilding into ancillary accommodation with new single storey link to existing dwelling at 18 The Green, Brill. Due to the potential for archaeological remains to be present on the site a condition was attached to the permission requiring the carrying out of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation that was submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) issued a generic brief for a watching brief for this development site. This Written Scheme of Investigation outlined the methods by which the archaeological watching brief would be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

1.3 Archaeological Background

This site is of interest because it lies within the historic core of Brill, close to known medieval pottery production sites (CAS5211) and the projected extent of a scheduled earthwork of likely prehistoric date (CAS106, Buckinghamshire SAM No 143). This development site lies on the village green, close to the parish church. Of particular interest is the date that settlement was established in this area around the green and the potential for the green/church area to be a focus for higher status occupation in the medieval period. A watching brief conducted at 20 Church Street, 120m to the west, suggested that the area could have higher status occupation during the 17th and 18th centuries (JMHS 2009).

Brill is of considerable archaeological interest with evidence for Iron Age occupation adjacent to the church associated with an earthwork (Historic Environment Record Number 0106; NGR SP 6560 1389), which may be the remains of a hillfort rampart (Farley 1989), but are likely to be later (JMHS 2005). In the late Saxon period, Brill was a royal manor and the centre of an estate (Baines 1995). Brill was the most important settlement within the medieval forest of Bernwood. 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. In the 13th and early 14th centuries Brill was described as a borough but thereafter it went into decline and lost

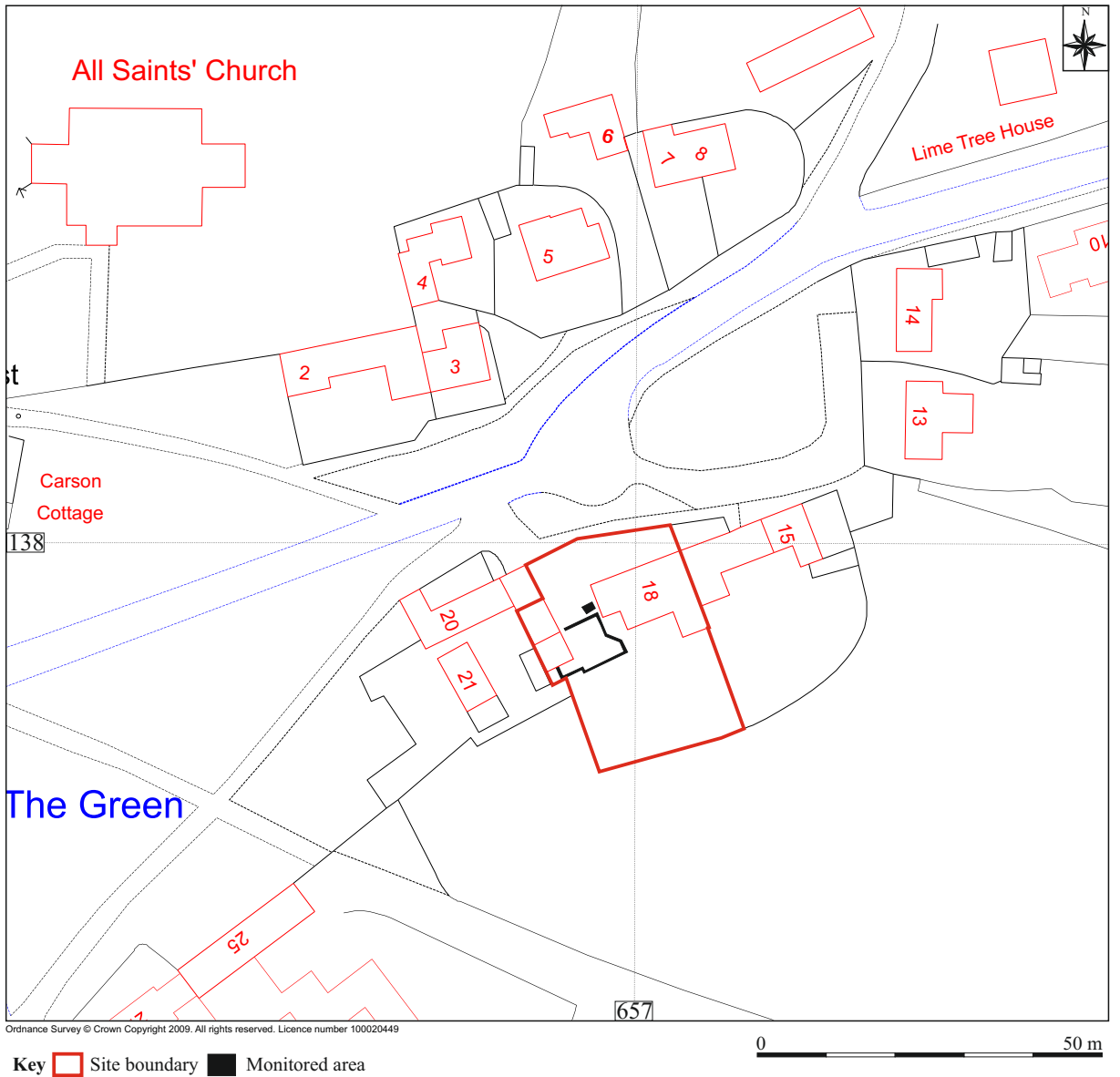
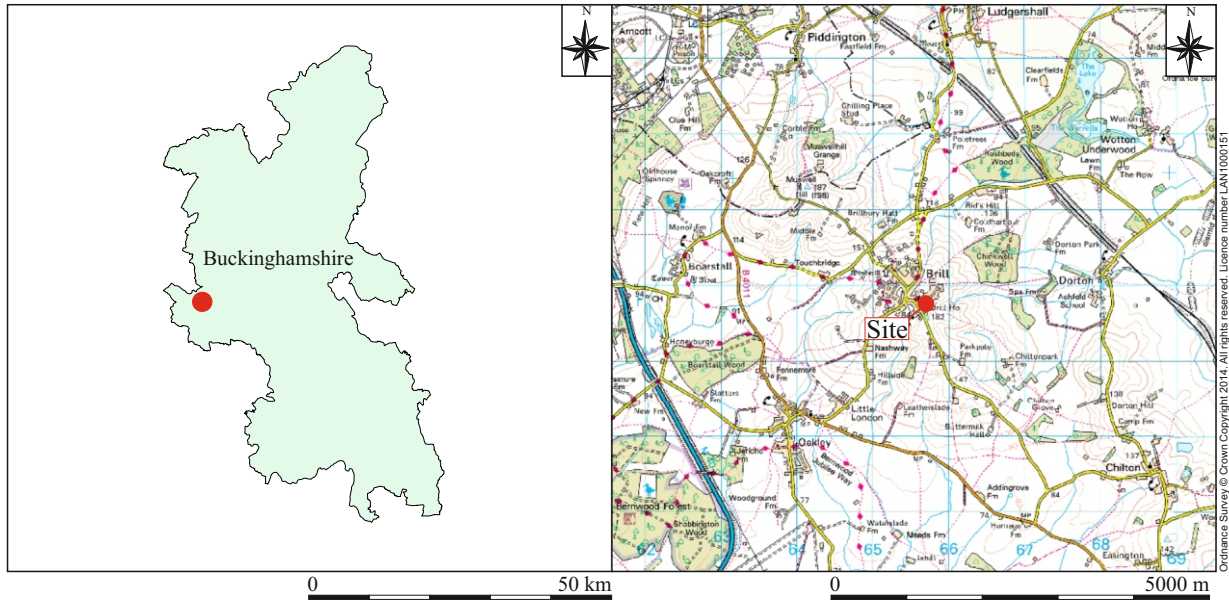


Figure 1: Site location

its status as a town. Brill was the centre of an important regional pottery and tile industry, which is believed to have originated in the 12th century and continued to be active into the post-medieval period when it also produced bricks (Harvey 1997). During the Civil War Brill was briefly garrisoned by Parliament during the winter of 1644.

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:

- Evidence relating to the projected line of the scheduled earthwork.
- Evidence relating to the apparently high-status occupation in the central core around the church.
- Dating evidence relating to the origins of occupation fronting on to The Green.
- Remains of pottery, tile and brick manufacture.

3 STRATEGY

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of all excavations that disturbed or was likely to destroy archaeological remains. This involved the observation of the excavation for new foundations and new service runs.

Archaeological features or concentrations of artefacts were recorded by written, drawn and photographic record. If features were identified then sufficient work was carried out to date, characterise and record the remains in accordance with the project objectives. All artefacts were collected and retained, except for concentrations of building material where only a representative sample was retained.

4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

All features were assigned individual context numbers. These numbers covered both the feature cuts and the fills for pits and ditches which were excavated by hand. Context numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material.

4.1 Features and deposits

Upon arrival the topsoil (01) had mostly been removed, revealing a large spread of brick and tile rubble, (02) covering the majority of the site to a maximum depth of 700mm. This rubble layer was interpreted as a modern levelling deposit. Below this deposit was a layer of subsoil (03) 0.56m thick, overlying the natural geology (10)

Approximately 24m of foundation trenching was observed during the works. The foundation trench was machine excavated with a 400mm wide ditching bucket to a

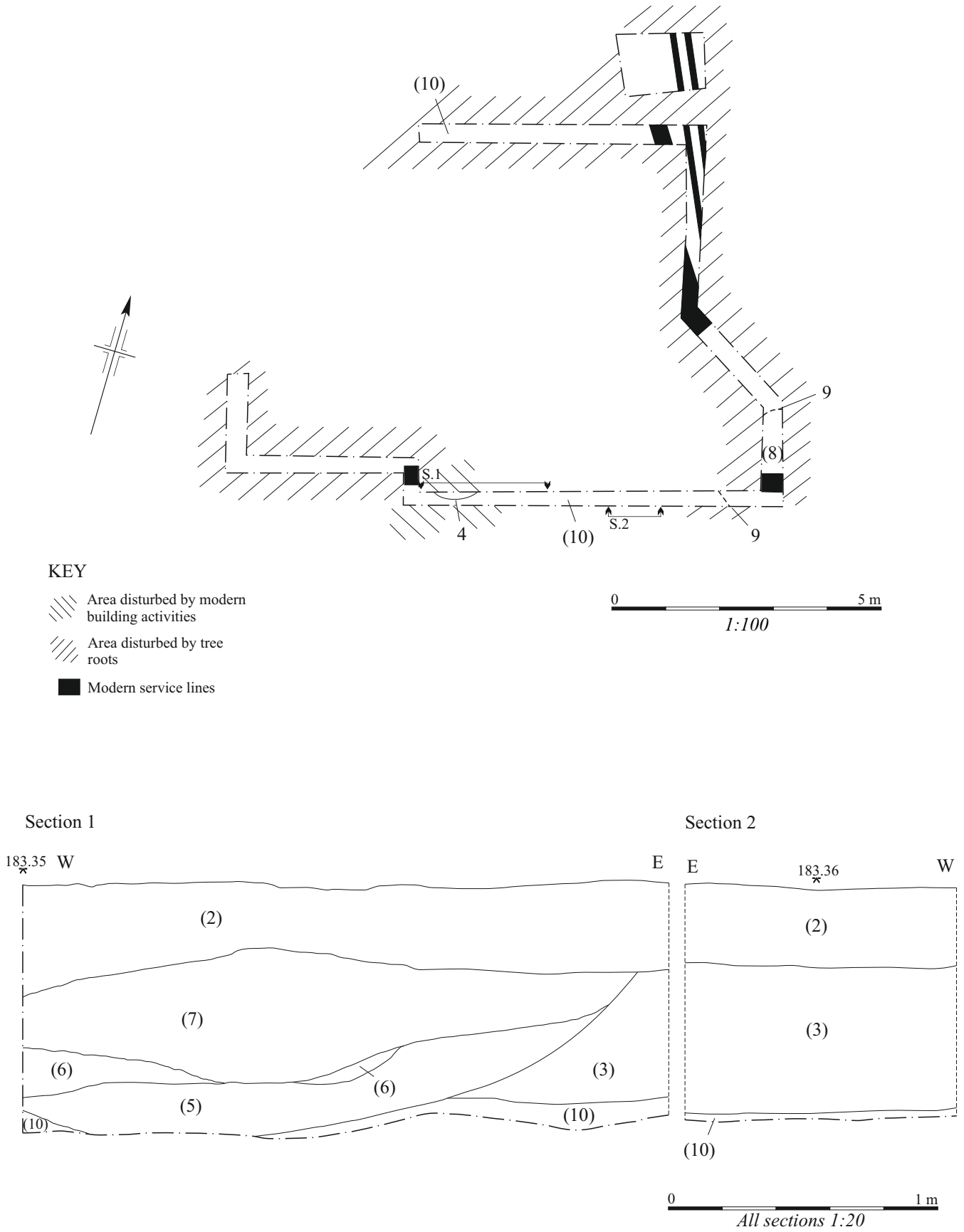


Figure 2: Plan and sections.

depth of 900mm. Modern service lines were observed during the excavation of the trench along with two negative features cut into the natural geology.

Half way along the southern stretch of the foundation trench was the first of these features, a large pit 04. The pit was not fully exposed by the works but the part of it that was revealed had a sub-circular shape in plan with gradual, concave sloping sides. The pit was cut from the top of the subsoil with the base disappearing into the natural geology. The base was not revealed as it was below the impact level. This pit was initially in-filled with a loose, dark brown, silty clay that contained abundant tile fragments, animal bone and burnt material (05). This was overlain by a light yellowish white, sandy concentration that appeared to be degraded lime mortar (06). Capping this was a final fill of friable, reddish brown, silty clay with occasional small gravel inclusions and a few pottery fragments, (07). It originated no earlier than the 19th century.

Further east from this pit feature was a large, unidentifiable cut feature 09. Its shape in plan could not be determined from the small window of the foundation trench and it had been truncated heavily by modern building activities. Its extent or shape could not be determined either in plan or in section but a collection of pottery, bone and tile fragments recovered from its fill (08) suggest another possible large pit. The dating shows that it is post-medieval in origin.

4.2 Reliability of Results and Techniques

Although weather conditions were fair the small window presented by the works undertaken mean that the results are somewhat questionable. Modern building works seem to have disturbed much of the potential for the site.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 20 sherds with a total weight of 508g. It was mostly post-medieval or modern. It was recorded using the coding system of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit type-series (e.g. Mynard and Zeepvat 1992; Zeepvat et al. 1994), as follows:

MS9: Brill/Boarstall Ware, 1200-?1600. 2 sherds, 71g.

PM8: Red Earthenware, 16th – 19th century. 4 sherds, 73g.

PM25: White Earthenware, late 18th – 20th century. 4 sherds, 33g.

PM29: Rhenish Stonewares, AD1450+. 10 sherds, 331g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. All the pottery types are common finds in the region. The sherds are generally in good condition, and appear reliably stratified.

The sherd of MS9 from context 5 is very heavily burnt and shows some signs of spalling on the outer surface. Hence, given Brill's history as a pottery production centre, it may be manufacturing waste. The other sherd of MS9 is of early post-medieval date, and shows no such signs. All the sherds of German Stoneware from context 8 are from a single vessel, a bottle or jug of Frechen type, and of mid-16th –

17th century date. Such vessels are a common product of the industry, and well-known in early post-medieval England.

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type.

	MS9		PM8		PM29		PM25		
Cntxt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
U/S							3	15	U/S
5	1	55							13thC
7							1	18	19thC
8	1	16	4	73	10	331			M16thC
Total	2	71	4	73	10	331	4	33	

6 DISCUSSION

No significant archaeological features could be identified in this program of works. Of the two features discovered only one, 04, has any credible archaeological value although it appears post-medieval in date.

No evidence for the pre-historic earthworks could be seen or anything which might relate to the beginnings of the medieval settlement of Brill or anything which could be considered part of the high-status occupation close to the church.

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