

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

DE LA BECHE COTTAGE,

HAW LANE,

ALDWORTH, BERKSHIRE

NGR SU 5544 7836

On behalf of

Mr and Mrs Askar

APRIL 2013

REPORT FOR	Mr and Mrs Asker c/o Owens Galliver Architects LLP 10 High Street Pangbourne Reading Berkshire RG8 7AB
PREPARED BY	Stephen Yeates with contributions from David Gilbert
ILLUSTRATION BY	Andrej Čelovský
FIELD WORK	7 th and 11 th March 2013
REPORT ISSUED	10 th April 2013
ENQUIRES TO	John Moore Heritage Services Hill View Woodperry Road Beckley Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ Tel/Fax 01865 358300 Email: info@jmheritageservices.co.uk
JMHS Project No: Site Code	2016 AWDLB 12

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Summary</i>	<i>1</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	4
3 STRATEGY	4
3.1 Research Design	4
3.2 Methodology	4
4 RESULTS	6
4.1 Phase 1: pre post-medieval	6
4.2 Phase 2: Post-medieval, 19 th century	6
5 FINDS	6
5.1 Pottery (<i>by David Gilbert</i>)	6
5.2 Building Material	7
6 DISCUSSION	7
7 ARCHIVE	7
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	7
FIGURES	
Figure 1 Location	2
Figure 2 Plan and Sections	5

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services undertook a watching brief during groundworks for an extension to De La Beche Cottage at Aldworth, Berkshire (NGR SU 5544 7836). The cottage lies close to the line of the West Berkshire Grim's Ditch a scheduled ancient monument. Though the investigation did not find any intact deposits with Iron Age material it did locate the point at which the natural falls away on the edge of the ditch. The infilling deposit contained fragments of broken natural flint and post-medieval brick and tile, which is indicative of the upper part of the ditch being open until the time the cottage and garden were created.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The development site is located at the site of the De La Beche Cottage (NGR SU 5544 7836). This lies on the southern edge of the historic parish of Aldworth, which formed part of the administrative unit of Compton Hundred in the historic county of Berkshire. The present administrative district is West Berkshire Council.

The property is bounded on the south east by the line of the B4009, called locally Haw Lane. On the north side the property's boundary is located along the line of the Grim's Ditch, while to the west it is bounded by open fields.

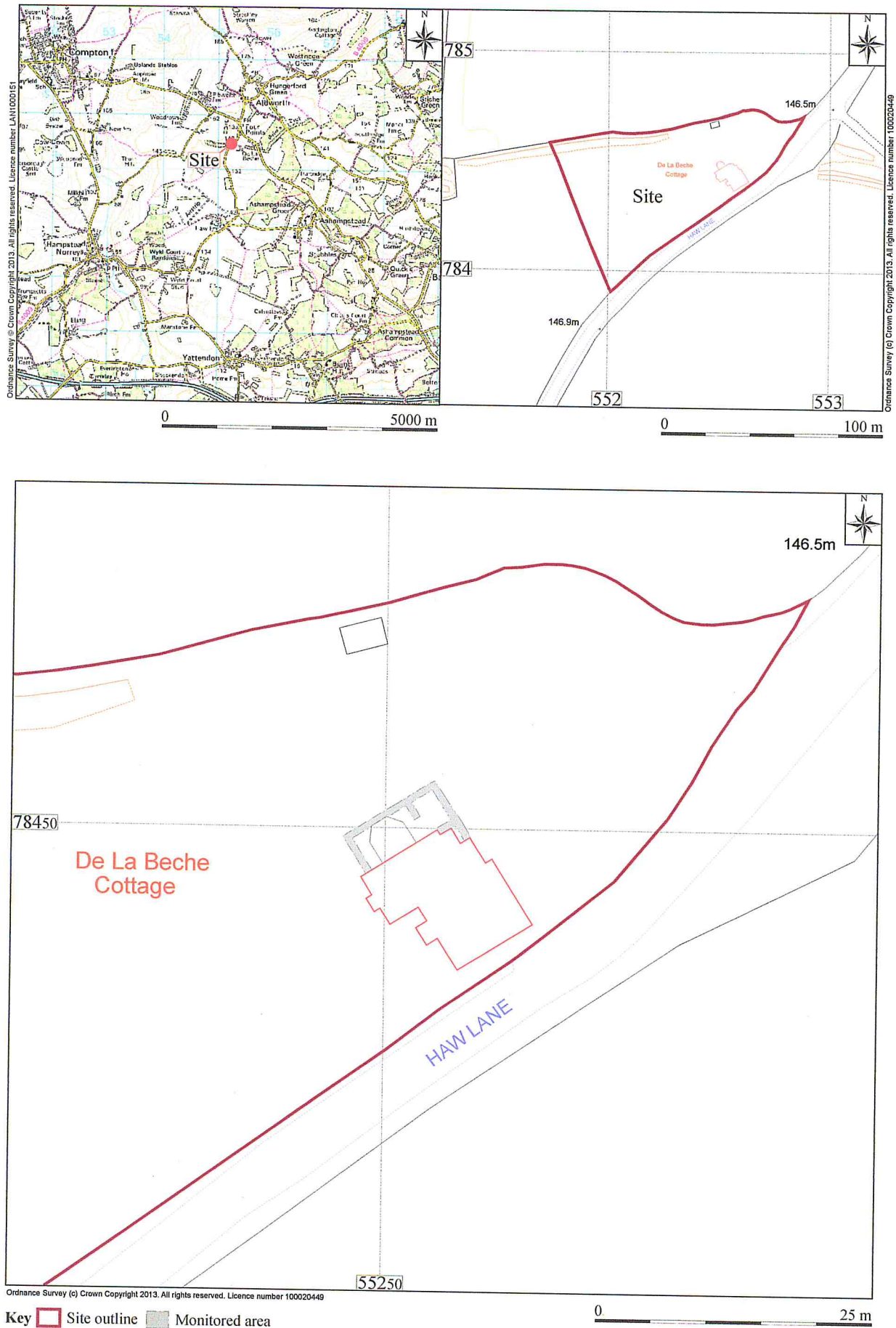
The site lies between 145 to 147m OD and is located on the east side of a southeast facing spur. The underlying geology is clay with flints, a superficial deposit formed 5 million years ago in the Quaternary and Neogene periods.

1.2 Planning Background

West Berkshire Council granted planning permission for the erection of a single storey extension at De La Beche Cottage (ref. 12/01231/HOUSE). Due to the site's potential for archaeological remains to be present, due to the proximity to the Grim's Ditch, a condition was attached to the permission requiring a watching brief to be maintained during the course of building operations. This was in line with NPPF and other Local Planning policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The Grim's Ditch is a linear earthwork that stretches across a large part of the Berkshire Downs and shares its name with a number of other monuments recognised in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Like many of these ditches the exact purpose of these boundaries remains obscure, although place-name evidence does provide some indication of their use and function. The bank is believed to run for 10 miles along the line of the Downs. The earliest reference is in c. 895, while the name Grim is associated with supernatural power and is an alternative for Woden (Gelling 1973, i.6). Roman finds have been excavated from the ditch about 1m to the east of De La Beche, and two 8th to 11th century Frankish battle axes from the monument in 1839 (EH 237328: SU549 784).



The settlement of Aldworth is first noted in 1066 when we are informed that Edward held a 5 hide estate from Edward the Confessor in freehold (Morgan 1979, 63.1).

In 1086 the estate had been awarded to Theodoric the Goldsmith, who held it from William I (Morgan 1979, 63.1). The site accounted for 2 hides then, and the estate contained 6 villagers, 4 smallholders, 4 slaves and more importantly woodland for 10 pigs. Interestingly at this time the estate of Hampstead Norris was also held by Theodoric, and was previously part of the territories held from King Edward the Confessor (Morgan 1979, 63.2), and Purley was also in this arrangement (Morgan 1979, 63.4).

The name in 1086 was recorded as *Elleorde*, but from 1167 is recognised as taking on the more familiar name *Aldewurda* (Gelling 1974, ii.495). The name has been interpreted as the old enclosure, **eald word**, or Ealda's enclosure. The former interpretation of old enclosure is more likely as there are a number of forms of this name, for example Aldsworth in Gloucestershire, where the reference is to a Roman enclosure probably religious. The centre of the village is marked out in an irregular oval shape, which may be a relic feature. The road to the north of this is Ambury, using Old English **burh** a fortification often used for Iron Age hill-forts. Roman brass coins have been recovered from the Vicarage at Aldworth (EH 237230: SU 5548 7944), while coin hoards have been found in the vicinity of the village (EH 1252405: NMR SU57NE35: SU 55 79), and a further one at Bower Farm (EH 1256642: SU 55 80). Any one of these finds could be associated with the earlier enclosure.

The main manor of Aldworth appears in the 13th century to be a fee or part of the manor of Hampstead, which included Aldworth, Hampstead Norreys and Purley (VCH 1924, 3-8). At some time by the middle of the 13th century the De La Beche Manor had been established. In 1261 the manor was held by Robert de la Beche, and was described as a messuage of land. He was succeeded by his son John, and in 1335 Philip de La Beche. Philip with Nicholas obtained a grant for free warren in La Beche and Aldworth. This implies that much of the De La Beche holding in the area was set aside for hunting rather than agriculture, which is interesting as the manor and later holdings lie to the south of the Grim's Ditch, but adjacent to it. In the same year they were to empark the manor. In 1338 there was a licence to crenellate the manor. The manor passed to Edmund De La Beche (brother and archdeacon of Berkshire) in 1345. The manor passed to Thomas Langford, believed to be a husband of a sister, in 1364. Subsequently the manor descended to William de Langford in 1390, Edward in 1411, Thomas in 1470, John in 1474, and Anne de Langford in 1509, who married William Stafford of Bradfield. In 1534 the manor came to Thomas Stafford, then Reade in 1584, and a nephew Edward in 1605, and left the Stafford family sometime around the Civil War. In 1675 the De La Beche manor was the subject of a fine that included William Allen of Streatley. The manor must have remained with the Allen family as in 1742 it was held by Richard Allen. By 1924 all manorial rights were held by Mr Monck.

There is documentary and archaeological evidence for a high status medieval site at De La Beche to the southeast. The site is believed to lie on the location of a fortified manor. Excavations in the 1930s identified part of a wall interpreted at the time as part of a 14th century castle. Further excavation in 2008 (JMHS 2009) revealed two phases of building from the 12th and 13th century.

The cottage is called De La Beche Cottage and originated as an estate workers cottage. Presumably this was held by the De La Beche estate. The cottage can be seen on the Ordnance Survey map of 1879, although the Grim's Ditch is not marked on this map through the cottage grounds.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To record any archaeological remains that will be impacted on by the development.
- To attempt to answer the research questions presented in the Historic Environment Character Zone for the Pang Valley – Middle (WBCAS 2008a).

In particular:

- Is there evidence relating to the construction and use of Grim's Ditch surviving on the site?
- Are there deposits that might help date the monument?
- Does evidence relating to medieval occupation of the area survive on the site?

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with West Berkshire Council Archaeological Services (*WBCAS*) the archaeological advisors to West Berkshire Council. 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 for Archaeologists (1994).

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of all excavations that disturbed or destroyed archaeological remains. This covered the digging of footings and other ground reductions.

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. A photographic record was also produced.

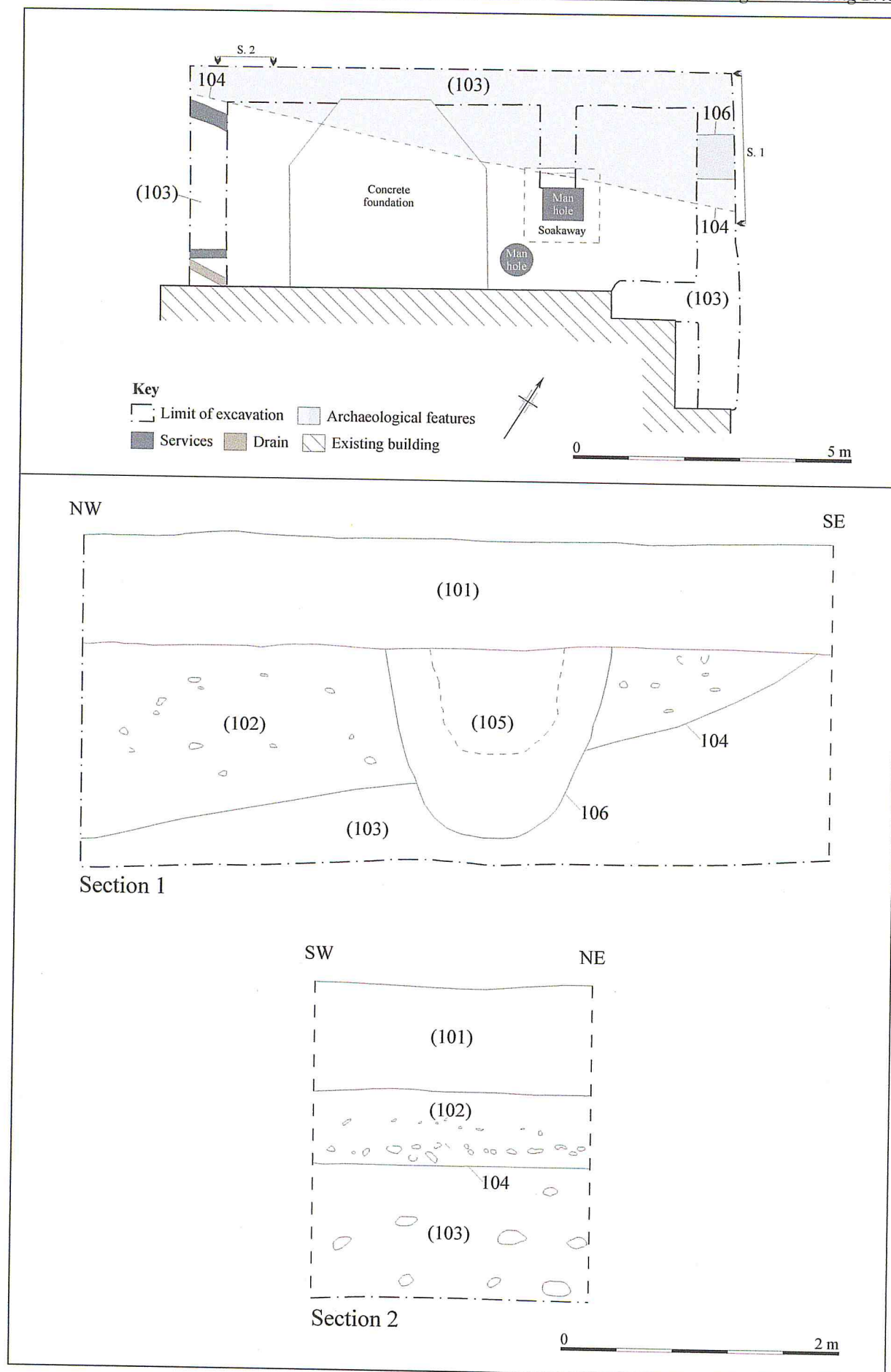


Figure 2. Plan and sections

4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

The natural (103) was a highly compact orange clay with flint nodules formed about 5 million years ago.

4.1 Phase 1: pre post-medieval

The natural appears to be truncated by cut 104, which it is assumed represents the edge of the ditch forming the Grim's Ditch. The level of the natural here falls away. As seen this cut was over 2.5m at its widest and at its deepest the cut was 0.7m. The surviving natural surface was falling away towards the line of the bank of the Grim's Ditch. This cut was probably made significantly earlier than the evidence from the fill. The fill (102) was a compact orange silt clay with numerous fragments of broken or fractured flint (unworked) and also fragments of brick and tile of a probable post-medieval origin.

What these two facts indicate is that the cut, which appears to be parallel to the line of the Grim's Ditch and aligns with a curving boundary to the east and west where the Grim's Ditch survives in a better condition probably marks the edge of the ditch of the monument. What the probable post-medieval material (later 16th to 18th century, probably the later part of that date range) in the upper part of deposit (102) indicates is that the silting up of this part of the ditch was still occurring at a late date, and that the upper parts of these soils were probably part of a plough soil of this date. The implication is that the upper part of the Grim's Ditch here was open in the early post-medieval period. This could be the case for two reasons that due to the size of the ditch that this had not fully silted up or that the ditch was recut at a later date, perhaps in 1335 when the de la Beche family had permission to empark; the line of the Grim's Ditch may have been re-excavated as part of this process.

4.2 Phase 2: Post-medieval, 19th century

Cutting through fill deposit (102) was feature 106 a linear cut 0.9m wide and 0.7m deep with steep sides and a rounded base, this contained part of a drain. The fill (105) was a compact black silt clay with lenses or patches of red material in the top fill as though it had been re-ploughed and disturbed after it had been cut.

This deposit was sealed by layer (101) a moderately compact black silt clay of some 0.4m thickness. This represents an homogenous topsoil and is probably an accumulation associated with the development of the cottage garden that must have occurred in the middle of the 19th century at the earliest.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery (by David Gilbert)

The single sherd was examined and recorded in line with guidelines produced by the Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG 2001). Quantification was by sherd count and weight. The post-medieval pottery fabric was matched to the type series employed in the Reading Waterfront excavations (Underwood 1997). The sherd was not retained.

REW: Red Earthenware. 1 sherd weighing 10g from context (101) c. Mid. 16th – late 18th century

5.2 Building material

The remains of a fragment of brick and tile were recovered from fill (102) of the Grim's Dyke. The tile measuring 113mm x 65mm x 15mm weighted 220g. The brick fragment contained only two flat faces and weighed 43g. Both fragments were of a red orange sandy fabric with small inclusions. Neither of them could be precisely dated within the post-medieval period 16th to early 19th century; the material was not retained.

6 DISCUSSION

The edge of the ditch of the Grim's Ditch was identifiable in the new foundation trenches. The fill, however, did not produce artefacts of a date that one would expect in that this contained pieces of brick and tile that were of a rough post-medieval date. This would imply that before the construction of the cottage there was a broad depression on the south side of the bank of the Grim's Ditch that lay open until the post-medieval period. The reason why this feature was still open at this date has a number of possibilities, the first that it was too large to have silted totally by this date, or alternatively that the ditch was re-dug in the 14th century when the de la Beche family obtained permission to empark their land. There are no other known lines of a **haga** (Old English fence line or wall) associated with woodland enclosures in the area and it is possible that the line of the Grim's Ditch was re-dug at this time. This would imply that the permission was either to restore or rework this monument to form part of the emparkment.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief

Written scheme of investigation

The project report

The primary site record

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to West Berkshire Museum when an accession number has been obtained..

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Gelling, M 1973 *The Place-names of Berkshire*, part 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

- Gelling, M 1974 *The Place-names of Berkshire, part 2*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1999 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*
- JMHS 2009 *An Archaeological Excavation at De La Beche, Aldworth, West Berkshire*, Oxford: Unpublished John Moore Heritage Services Report
- Morgan, P 1979 *Domesday Book: Berkshire*, Chichester: Phillimore
- MPRG 2001 *Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics*, *Medieval Pottery Research Group Occasional Paper 2*
- Underwood, C. 1997 Pottery, in J.W. Hawkes and P.J. Fasham *Excavations on Reading Waterfront Sites, 1979-1988*. Wessex Archaeology Report 5, 142-161
- Victoria County History 1924 *A History of the County of Berkshire*, Vol. 4
- WBCAS 2008a Pang Valley Middle – Historic Environment Character Zone
<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=19428&p=0>
- Yeates, S J 2006 *Religion, Community and Territory: Defining Religion in the Severn valley and Adjacent Hills from the Iron Age to the Early Medieval Period*. Oxford: British Archaeological Report British Series 411 (iii)