



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING ACTION**

**AT**

**BASSETSBURY TITHE BARN, BASSETSBURY LANE,  
HIGH WYCOMBE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

**SU 8780 9236**

*On behalf of*

*Mr. R. Clark*

**February 2007**

**REPORT FOR** Mr. R. Clark  
Bassetsbury Barn  
Bassetsbury Lane  
High Wycombe

**PREPARED BY** David Gilbert

**FIELDWORK** 30<sup>th</sup> January 2007

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**CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<b><i>SUMMARY</i></b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
<b>2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3 STRATEGY</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	3
<b>4 RESULTS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5 FINDS</b>	<b>5</b>
5.1 Pottery	5
5.2 Tile	5
<b>6 DISCUSSION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>7 THE ARCHIVE</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>8 BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>7</b>
 <b>FIGURES</b>	
<b>Figure 1</b> Site location	<b>2</b>
<b>Figure 2</b> Plans and Sections	<b>4</b>

## **Summary**

*A recording action was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the construction of a new building adjacent to Bassetsbury Tithe Barn. A possible earlier water channel was recorded that is likely to have been associated with milling activities on the Wye. This channel was later infilled with buildings erected over it.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The site is within a current car parking area to the north of the Tithe Barn associated with Bassetsbury Manor (NGR SU 8780 9236).

### **1.2 Planning Background**

No planning condition was attached to this development. Upon commencing excavation for the new foundations David Radford of Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) advised that a detailed archaeological recording action should be implemented. This involved an archaeologist being present during the ground works.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

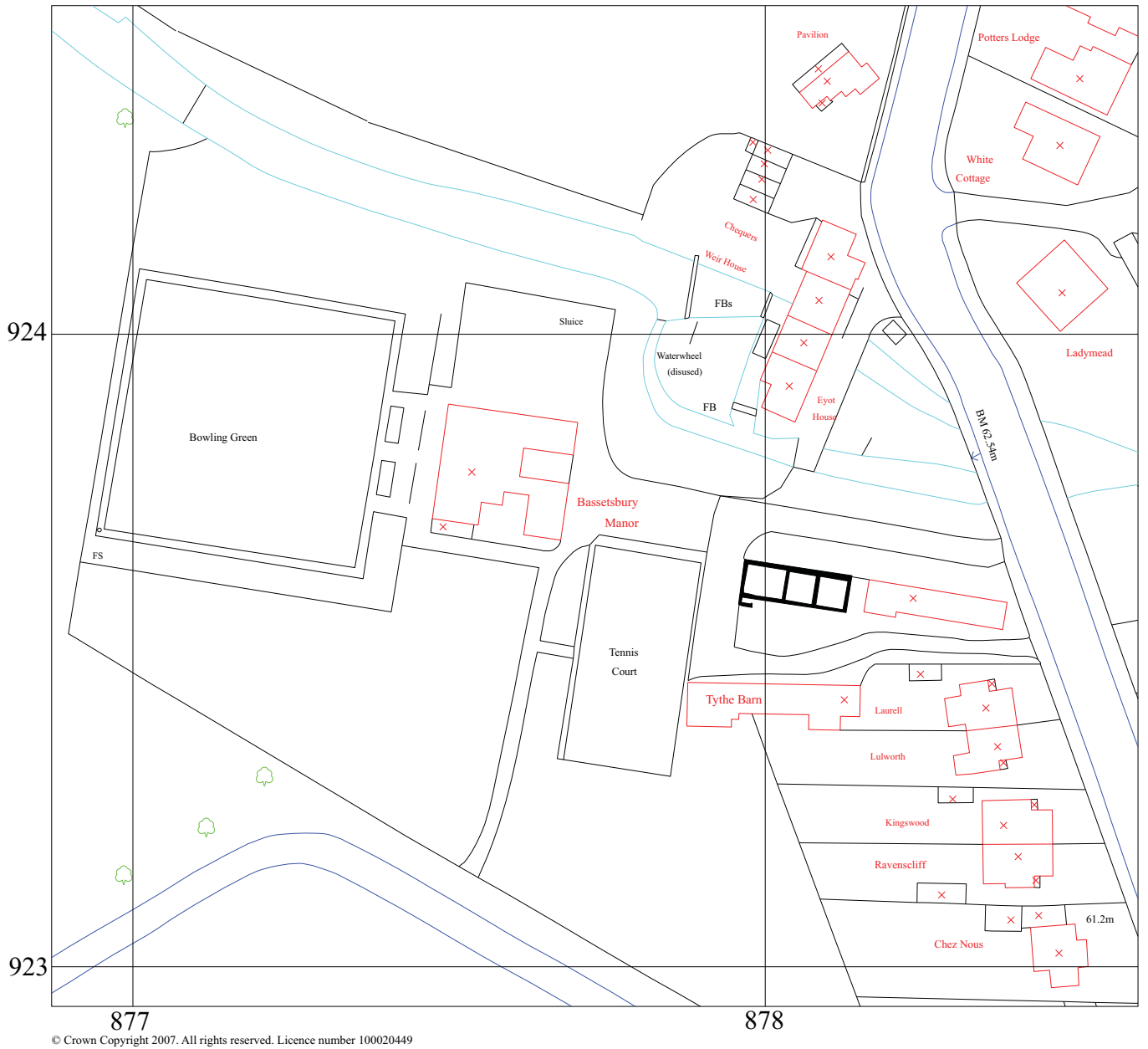
The site lies adjacent to the medieval and post-medieval Bassetsbury Mill (Buckinghamshire Sites and Monuments Record Number CAS2868) and a historic crossing point of the river. Six mills are recorded at High Wycombe at the time of the Domesday Survey, one of which was attached to the nearby Bassetsbury Manor. The current mill and mill house dates from 1788 and is a residential structure listed Grade II with the weir and sluice gate intact at the rear.

The site of Bassetsbury Manor (CAS1222) lays just south-west of the mill with the current manor house dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Tithe Barn is an older building (Pevsner & Williams 1994). A Roman Villa and Bath House is known some 300m to the east (CAS380). Geophysical survey undertaken in The Rye sports field has indicated the presence of other features and structures associated with the villa in this area (Northampton Archaeology, 2001).

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The aims of the investigation as were as follows:

- To make a record of any significant remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.
- To make public the results of the investigations.



 AREA OF RECORDING ACTION

Figure 1. Site location

### 3 STRATEGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

Due to the immediate need for the implementation of the recording action Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Services (BCAS) did not require a Written Scheme of Investigations prior to the commencement of work.

#### 3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist monitored the excavation of the foundation trenches for the new building. Services had previously been laid for this structure.

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.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

### 4 RESULTS (*Figure 2*)

All deposits and features were assigned individual context numbers. Context numbers in [ ] indicate features i.e. pit cuts; while numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material.

The natural (7), where exposed, was degraded chalk. Where the natural was exposed it did not appear to be overlain by deposit (6) but by deposit (4). The lowest archaeological layer was a compact deposit of light to mid grey clay silty loam with approximately 40% flint gravel and degraded chalk (6), which lay directly below deposit (4). In places this was not fully excavated, but in areas where it was, it was 0.2m thick. This deposit also contained a small amount of abraded brick and tile fragments.

Above this was a deposit of brown-grey clay loam with approximately 25% stone fragments (4). It varied in thickness across the site from 0.47m to 0.8m in places. It contained a large quantity of ceramic tiles and some pottery.

Cut into (4) was the foundations of a wall [5]. This cut was 0.6m wide and 0.55m deep. It appeared to be aligned north – south. The foundations consisted of large flint nodules in an orange sand and lime mortar matrix.

Above this layer (4) was a compact band of chalk (3). It appeared wedge shape in section, measuring 0.05m to the west of the site and 0.4m towards the east. It also appeared to slope from south to north towards the river. It did not extend to the very west of the area and did not cover wall [5].

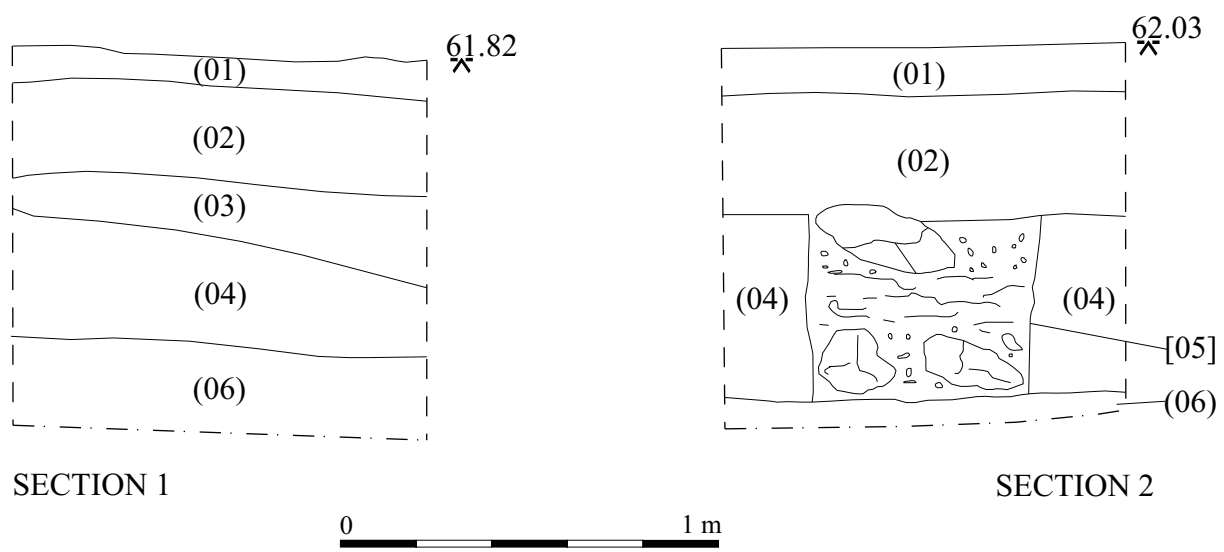
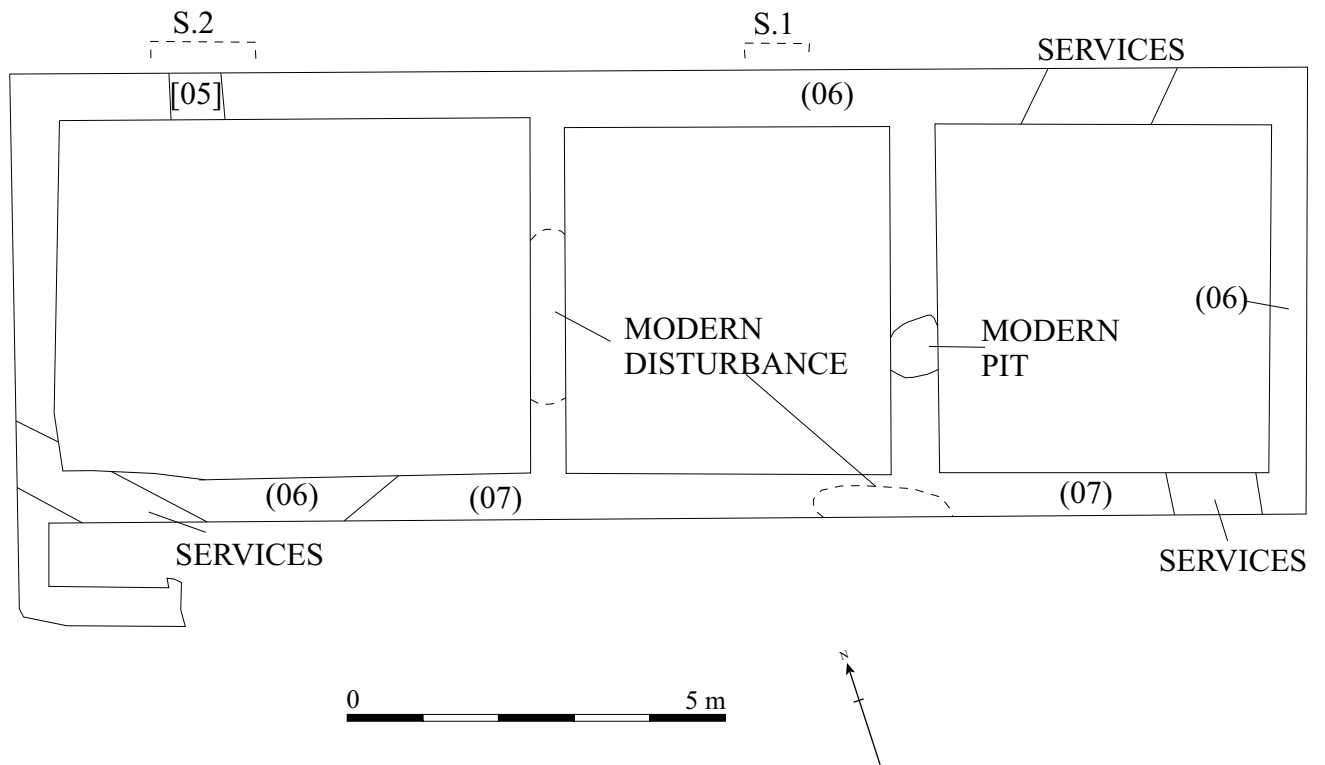


Figure 2. Plan and sections

Lying above the chalk layer was a dark brown-grey sandy loam with 40-50% stone and brick fragments up to 0.4m thick (2). In places this contained lenses of chalk, especially noticeable under the tarmac area to the north of the excavation. Pottery of 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century date was recorded within this deposit.

The uppermost layer varied from a layer of tarmac and associated make up layers 0.15m thick, compact gravel chips 0.1m thick or disturbed ground from the demolition of a previous building this was also approximately 0.1m thick (1).

Numerous modern services and areas of disturbance were noted in the area of the foundations.

Unfortunately recent repair work on the nearby bridge in 2005 removed the local benchmark. Therefore all level had to be taken from a spot height on the road to the south of the site, hence a degree of inaccuracy may be present.

## **5 FINDS**

### **5.1 Pottery (by Paul Blinkhorn)**

Two sherds of pottery with a total weight of 22g were noted from Context (4). One 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:

PM8: *Red Earthenware* 17<sup>th</sup> century. 1 sherd, 12g

The following, not present in the MK type-series, was also noted:

Late Medieval Oxidized ware, 15<sup>th</sup> C. Hard, sandy orange ware, glazed and unglazed, in a variety of late medieval vessel forms. Similar wares were produced at a kiln at Jack Ironcap's Lane, Great Brickhill, Bucks (Beamish 1989). 1 sherd, 10g

Both types are reasonable well-known in the region, and suggest that there was activity at the site from the 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **5.2 Tile**

Large amounts of tile were recorded from almost all the layers. Tile similar to that of nearby Bassetsbury Manor was present in context (2) and presumably of 17<sup>th</sup> century date (Pevsner and Williamson 1994). Of particular interest are medieval plain roof tiles with peg holes from context (4). Also from this context were what appeared to be over-fired Roman tile wasters. These were heavily fragmented, but some pieces displayed the characteristic right angle lip.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

A similar layer to context (6) was recorded during work at the near by bridge in 2005 (JMHS). Here it was obviously a water bourn deposit. It is possible that an earlier river channel ran through this area. This may also explain the sloping of the chalk



deposit (3), it is higher in the south dipping away to the north. This may have followed the infill profile of the channel. It may indicate that the river course moved slightly northwards over time. In fact the natural (7) recorded to the south may be part of a remnant bank. This edge appears to curve, however it is obscured by modern disturbance.

There have been a series of mills in the area and the water course may have been altered to facilitate this industry. Certainly this occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A plan held by the Buckinghamshire County Record (Proposed Footpath near Wycombe by W Hussey, dated 1820) shows the mill set across the river with a further building (a pub at one time) attached to the north end. The River Wye flows through the bridge-type mill building. Two sluices are indicated upstream on the south side of the river; possibly feeding an underground channel. The 1840 Tithe map shows the course slightly differently with two sluices feeding an open channel, which rejoins the river in the position that it does today. By the issue of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map of 1883 (surveyed 1875/6) the mill arrangement has been drastically altered. While the river still flows under the mill a new channel has been created parallel to the rear of the mill building and leading into the by-pass channel to the south. The western part of the by-pass channel has been infilled (probably with material excavated for the new channel) up to the sluice nearest the mill building.

Similar infilling can be seen with the deposits above (6) that appear to be mixed dumping layers and contain artefacts of differing dates. The Roman tile is likely to be associated with the nearby Villa and Bath House (CAS380). It is probable this material was brought in from farther a field rather than the Villa site extending this far.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century date for the pottery from (4) matches the date of the tiles in the same layer. It is possible that this layer relates to the construction of nearby Bassetsbury Manor.

The building demolished prior to the start of work had relatively shallow foundation that did not penetrate as deep as context (3). The wall [5] probably relates to one of the building recorded on the W Hussey map of 1820.

## **7 THE ARCHIVE**

The archive consists of the following:

- The project brief
- Written scheme of investigation
- The project report
- The primary site records
- The photographic and drawn records

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services. The archive will be transferred to:

Buckinghamshire County Museum, Technical Centre, Tring Road, Halton, Aylesbury  
HP22 5PJ under accession number 2004.160

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