

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**AT**

**60 WATLING LANE,**

**DORCHESTER-ON-THAMES, OXFORDSHIRE**

**NGR (SU 5768 9394)**

*On behalf of*

*Mr R Booth*

**NOVEMBER 2015**

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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out an evaluation at 60 Watling Lane, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire (NGR SU 5768 9394). The evaluation consisted of one 10m long trench across the development site. The trench contained part of a large Post-Medieval quarry pit.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

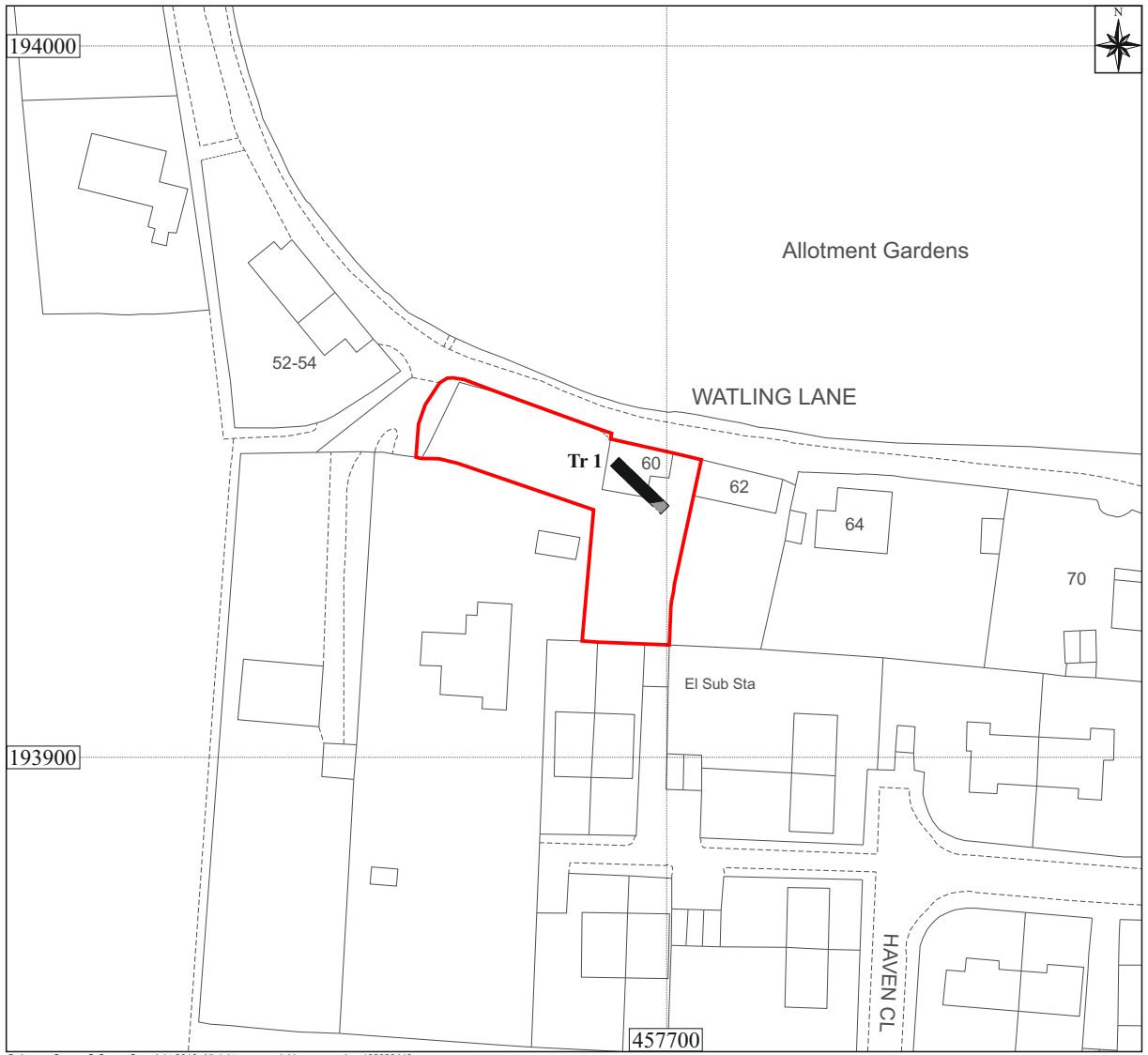
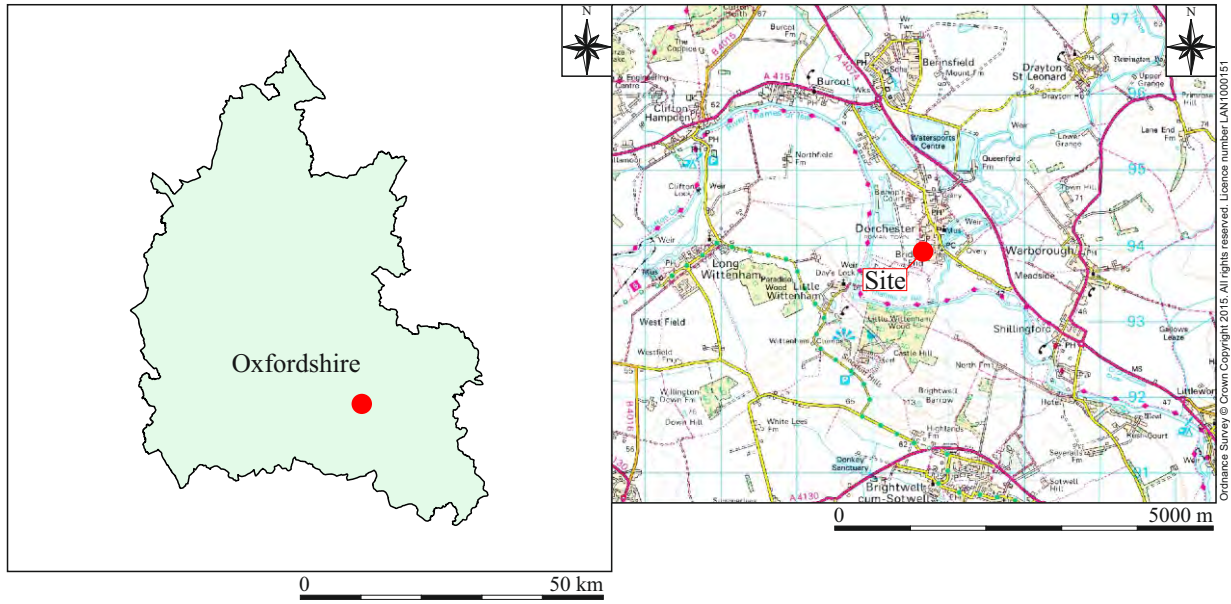
The development site was located on the south-west edge of Dorchester-on-Thames, on the south side of Watling Lane and to the north of Bridge End (NGR SU 5768 9394). The underlying geology is First (Flood Plain) Terrace Deposits (Geological Survey of Great Britain. Henley-on-Thames Sheet 254. Solid and Drift Geology 1:50,000). The site lies at approximately 48m OD and was a residential dwelling.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Planning permission has been granted by South Oxfordshire District Council for demolition of existing dwelling; erection of 2x2 bedroom semi-detached dwellings; as amended by dwgno. 1112-PO1a showing 1st floor escape windows and land access to the properties and by dwgno. 1112-PO1c received on 18 February 2015 showing a reduction in the ridge height of the dwellings (P15/S0010/FUL). Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological features a programme of archaeological evaluation work is required. A condition (9) has been attached to the permission requiring the submission and approval of a Written Scheme of Investigation and condition (10) requiring an evaluation of the proposed new building footprint post demolition. This is in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET) has advised on the scope of work required.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The area of proposed development is within an area of considerable archaeological potential. The site lies 13m south of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Dorchester Roman Town (Sam OX116; SU 5768 9395) and is located immediately outside the south-west corner of the Roman defences. Roman habitation has been recorded south of the town just 50m south-west of the site where a number of Roman finds were found including pottery, building materials and the handle of a bronze spoon (County Historic Environment Record PRN 1983; NGR SU 5771 9390) and Roman pottery was recovered 115m south-south-west of the site (PRN 2854; SU 5779 9389). A number of linear features, probably relating to the Roman town, have been identified from aerial photographs adjacent to the application area with the closest being 50m west of the site (PRN 15363; SU 5760 9400). The pottery finds all date from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and it is likely that the site lies in an area that was occupied during the early development of the Roman town. A relatively large number of burials have also been recorded south of the town and approximately 150m south-west of the site (PRN 5530; 5783 9385 and PRN 26191; SU 5781 9382).



Key  Site boundary  Evaluation trenches  Archaeological features

Figure 1: Site location

270m south of the site is another Scheduled Ancient Monument, the Iron Age Oppida of Dyke Hills (SAM OX17). The monument consists of a defended dense settlement and it is possible that further occupation to the north of its defences could have existed and therefore survive on the site. A series of linear cropmarks identified from aerial photographs 250m south-west of the application site have been interpreted as a possible conquest period Roman fort which may have formed the origin of Roman and modern Dorchester (PRN 17314; SU 5781 9374). This is located midway between the Iron Age defended settlement and the later Roman town and therefore it is possible that deposits and features related to this important period of change and development of the town could survive on the proposal site.

An evaluation immediately to the west of the current dwelling and within the plot identified a Roman quarry pit which contained sherds of Roman greyware pottery. In addition post-medieval quarrying and a series of pits were found. Immediately south-east of the property, a Roman rubbish dump was found which contained 1st century AD pottery including Samian ware.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

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

To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.

To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.

To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.

In particular to establish if features relating to the Roman landscape are present within the footprint of the proposed new build.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire Historic and Natural Environment Team (OHaNET). 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 Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

### 3.2 Methodology

The field evaluation comprised of the mechanical excavation of a trench 10m long and 1.6m wide (Figs 1 and 2). This was excavated after demolition of the existing house to ground level and break out of existing floors but prior to grubbing out of foundations.

Excavation was by an 8 ton excavator equipped with a ditching bucket. Mechanical excavation was taken down to the uppermost archaeological horizon or geological horizon under direct archaeological supervision. The machine excavation was used only for the removal of non-archaeologically significant material.

## 4 RESULTS (Figure 2 and Plate 1)

Trench 1 was orientated northwest / southeast and measured 10m in length, 1.6m wide and up-to 0.5m deep and contained a mid-brown silty clay topsoil, 1/01, that was 0.22m thick, overlying an orange / brown silty clay subsoil 1/02 that was 0.2m thick. Overlying these deposits in the northwestern extent of the trench was rubble layer 1/03 that was up-to 0.5m thick, that formed part of the rear foundations of the property and demolition rubble. Underlying all these deposits was the natural gravels. Cut into the natural gravels was quarry pit 1/04; the full extent of the quarry pit remains unclear as it extended further than the trench in both width and length, but the southern edge of the pit was visible in the trench. Within the trench the quarry pit was 1.6m wide, 8.5m long and 0.88m deep, with a moderate slope and an undulating base. It was filled by a single fill of mid-brown silty clay 1/05 that contained 10 sherds of 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century pottery, 1 glass fragment, 6 small fragments of tile and brick and two sherds of residual probable Roman pottery. The quarry pit had two hand excavated and one machine excavated interventions to define the southern edge of the feature, collect artefacts for dating and ascertain the depth of the quarry pit.

The evaluation was conducted in changeable weather conditions. The feature edges and the natural gravels were clear, thus the reliability of the results is considered to be good.

## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Post-medieval Pottery *By Paul Blinkhorn*

Context (1/05) produced ten sherds of pottery weighing 485g. They were all from the same vessel, and re-fitted to form the full profile of a chamber-pot in Glazed Red Earthenware, fabric OXDR of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984). The vessel has an internal orange glaze, and is a typical product of the 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century output of the tradition. Such vessels, in similar fabrics, are known from deposits of this date in Oxford (e.g. *ibid.*, fig. 21 no. 10).

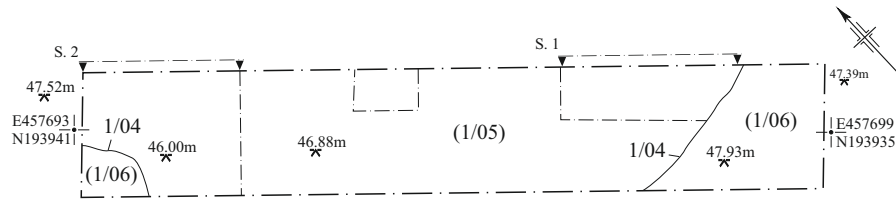


Plate 1. Trench 1 looking northwest

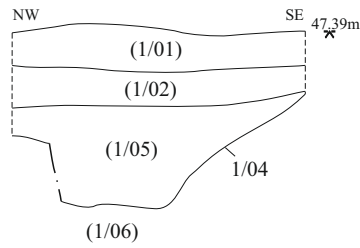
## 5.2 Probable Roman Pottery *By Jane Timby*

The archaeological work resulted in the recovery of 12 sherds of pottery from a post-medieval quarry pit (1/05). Ten sherds have been dated as post-medieval and not submitted for comment. Accompanying this group are two bodysherds (12 g). One sherd is a piece of wheel-made black sandy ware from a closed form and is probably of Roman date. The second piece is a coarse, grey sandy ware with sparse calcareous inclusions and could be medieval or Roman.

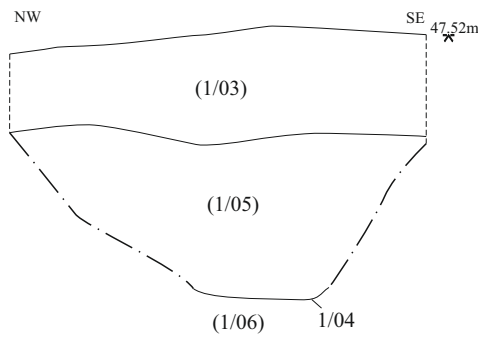




Trench 1



Section 1



Section 2

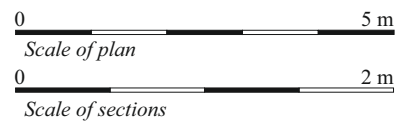


Figure 2: Trench 1 - plan and sections

The presence of either Roman or medieval material as residual finds would not be surprising at a location such as Dorchester on Thames which has a long history of occupation from pre-Roman times onwards. The assemblage is too small to warrant any further work.

It is not recommended to retain the pottery.

### 5.3 Other finds *By Simona Denis*

#### Glass

A single fragment of glass vessel, weighing 37 gr, was found in context (1/05). The curved item, measuring 76x77 mm with a maximum thickness of 6 mm, shows extensive shedding completely obliterating the original glass colour.

The poor state of preservation of the fragment, and the lack of any diagnostic feature, only allow very limited observations. However, the object was tentatively identified as a portion of bottle or vessel body, possibly including part of the heel. A broad date to the post-medieval period is suggested.

It is not recommended to retain the glass fragment.

#### Ceramic Building Material

A small assemblage of 6 fragments of ceramic building material, of a combined weight of 237 gr, were found in context (1/05). The state of preservation of the items is generally fair, although largely incomplete; no complete dimension other than thickness was preserved.

The collection is composed almost entirely of plain clay roof tile, with the exception of a single fragment tentatively identified as brick. The general aspect of the artefacts suggests a post-medieval date.

Four fabrics were distinguished, mainly on the basis of size and frequency of the inclusions:

1. Orange-pink, sandy with frequent very small inclusions
2. Orange-pink, sandy with occasional medium inclusions
3. Orange-pink, sandy with rare small and medium inclusions
4. Grey-pink, sandy with dark pink core and frequent small inclusions

Context	Type	Colour	Fabric	Weight (gr)	Length (mm)	Width (mm)	Thickness (mm)	Comments	Date Range
1/05	?Brick	Orange-Pink	1	17	37	20	23 (incomplete)		Post-Medieval
	Roof tile	Grey-Pink	4	63	61	55	12	One edge preserved	
		Orange-Pink	1	10	35	21	14 (incomplete)		
			2	17	38	21	16		
			2	61	66	47	13	Partial peg hole. One edge preserved	
		3	69	60	45	12	One edge preserved		

The possible brick fragment preserved a very straight arris, but no complete dimension.

A single, incomplete peg-hole was observed on one of the fabric 2 fragments. The peg-hole is close to the partially preserved edge of the tile.

It is not recommended to retain undiagnostic fragments due to their very limited potential for further analysis.

## 6 DISCUSSION

Trench 1 contained the southern edge of a large post-medieval quarry pit that extended for 8.5m along the 10m long trench. No other archaeological features were identified; this suggests that the quarry pit could have destroyed any earlier archaeological features if they were present.

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Context	Type	Description	Depth	Width	Length	Finds	Interpretation	Date
<b>Trench 1</b>								
1/01	Deposit	Mid-brown silty clay	0.22m	-	-		Topsoil	
1/02	Deposit	Orange brown silty clay	0.2m	-	4m		Subsoil	
1/03	Deposit	Rubble layer	0.5m	-	8.5m		Rubble layer of demolished house	
1/04	Cut	Southern edge of Quarry pit	0.88m	1.6m	8.5m		Quarry pit	Post-Medieval
1/05	Fill	Mid brown silty clay	0.88m	1.6m	8.5m	Pottery CBM	Single fill of quarry pit	Post-Medieval
1/06	Deposit	Yellow limestone gravels	-	-	-		Natural	