

**JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
ON LAND ADJACENT TO  
WATLING LANE,  
DORCHESTER-ON-THAMES, OXFORDSHIRE  
SU 57689405 – SU 57689409**

**JULY 2004**

**REPORT FOR**

**PREPARED BY** John Moore

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## **Summary**

*A watching brief carried out during ground reduction for a new drive did not locate any evidence of the known Roman town defences.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Fig. 1)**

The new drive runs from an existing access off Watling Lane, through the edge of an extensive area of allotments and to the rear of 51 Watling Lane. The existing access runs from SU 57639404 to SU 57689405. The widening and parking area construction was constructed from SU57689405 to SU 57699409.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

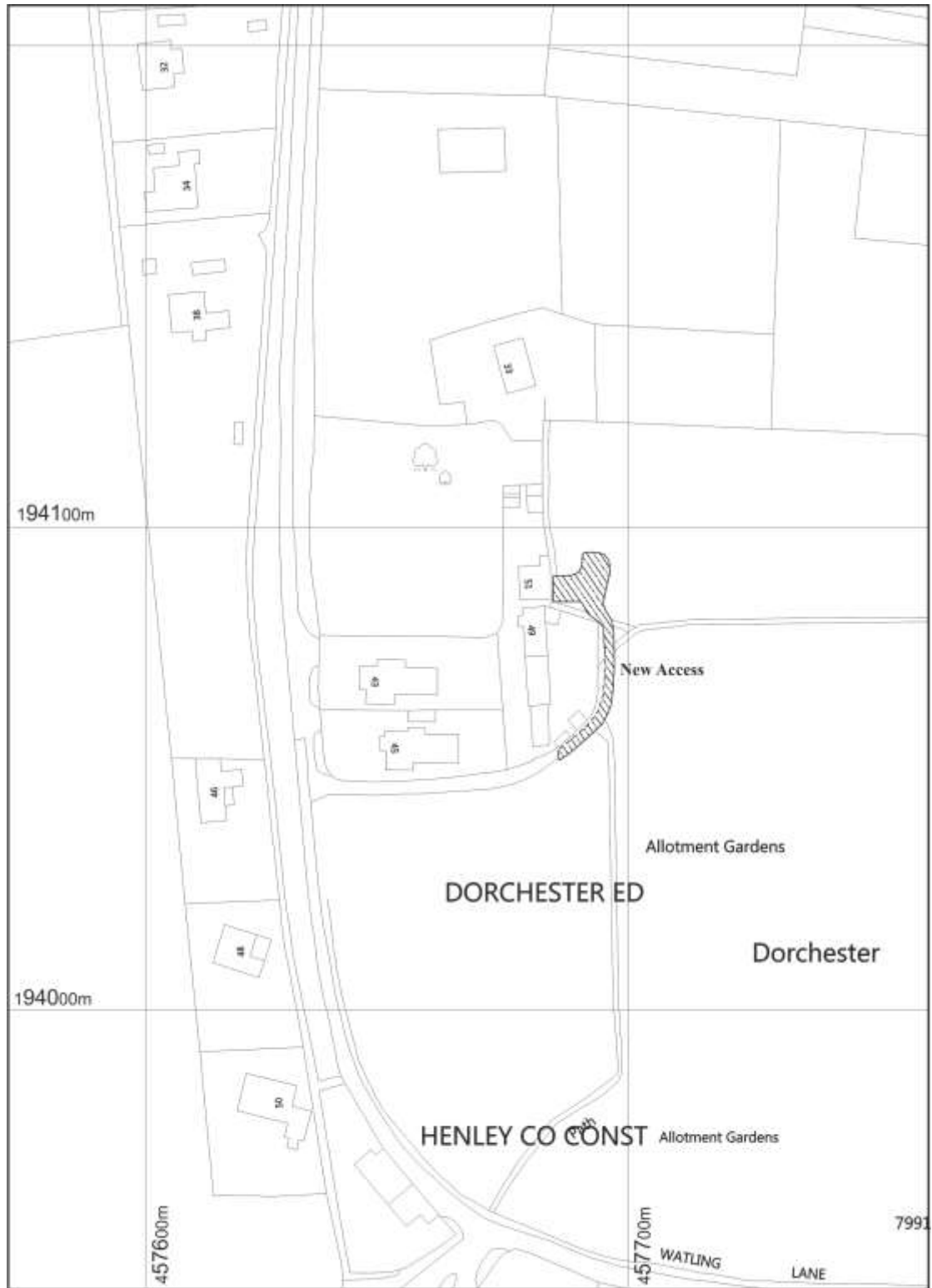
Planning permission and Scheduled Monument Consent were granted for the upgrading and extension of an existing access track to form vehicular access and an extension of the access to provide a new parking area. The works took place within Scheduled Monument Oxon 116, part of the Roman Town, and specifically affected the line of the western defences.

Planning permission had been obtained under an appeal judgement (Application reference P98/W0550; DOE Appeal reference APP/Q3115/A/99/1026484). Scheduled Monument Consent was granted in 2003 for the work affecting Scheduled Monument 116 (HSD/9/2/5921). This condition was granted subject to conditions.

- Condition ii:  
'No excavation shall take place in connection with these works greater than 100mm from the current ground surface'.
- Condition iii:  
'No development shall take place until a programme of archaeological works has been secured in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State advised by English Heritage'.

The planning permission was also subject to conditions, and the proposed archaeological monitoring and recording action was carried out under a condition attached to that permission, and in accordance with PPG 16 and South Oxfordshire Local Plan Policies.

Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services, on behalf of English Heritage, prepared a Brief for the work. John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS) in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Investigation* agreed with English Heritage and the County Archaeological Service (CAS) carried out the watching brief.



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**Figure 1: Site Location**

**1:1250**

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

Dorchester-on-Thames is situated within the site of a small Roman town, which consisted of roughly rectangular defences enclosing a civil settlement of about 13.5ha. It is generally thought to have been established in the Flavian period and the unusual increase in late Roman (Theodosian) coinage implies a thriving occupation throughout the 4<sup>th</sup> century and possibly into the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

The present Watling Lane runs to the west of, and approximately parallel with, the outer ditch of the Roman town defences. The existing access track runs across the line of the infilled outer and inner ditches, and across the line of the destroyed town wall and rampart behind it. The proposed new works and extensions to the access took place over the line of the destroyed rampart as defined by Hogg and Stevens (1937) in their 1935-6 excavations carried out around the environs of the current proposal area. Hogg and Stevens interpreted a light gravely/clay layer as the vestiges of the destroyed bank material.

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* 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.
- In particular
  - to ensure that no excavation shall take place in connection with these works greater than 100mm from the current ground surface
  - to recover finds exposed during the works
- The results of the investigations will be made public.

## **3 STRATEGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

A scheme of investigation was designed by JMHS and agreed with the CAS, English Heritage and the applicant. The work was carried out by JMHS and involved an archaeologist being present on the site during the ground reduction for the construction of the new drive.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994).

### **3.2 Methodology**

A 3.5 tonne excavator equipped with a toothless bucket removed 50-100mm of topsoil material along the line of the new access route. A base of roadstone was then laid down, which was to be covered by gravel. An archaeologist monitored all excavation and the excavated material was scanned with a metal detector.

## **4 RESULTS**

Deposits and fills are referred to in the text and figures in brackets (01), cut features are numbers in square brackets [07].

The topsoil (01) was composed of mid grey-brown friable sandy silt. The exposed surface after excavation was of the same material.

## **5 FINDS**

Within the western 7m of the excavation there were abundant amounts of 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery and other rubbish, including metal items. Thereafter there were only occasional finds of such material. This material was not retained.

No pottery or other finds of the Roman period were seen.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

The work carried out was confined to within topsoil deposits that have derived from the use of the area as allotments.

## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Hogg, A H A & Stevens, C E 1937 The defences of Roman Dorchester. *Oxoniensia* 2, 41-73.

Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994. Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations.