

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

A FURTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

16 ST GEORGE'S ROAD,

WALLINGFORD, OXFORDSHIRE

SU 60433 89753

On behalf of

Michael Brown & Sharon Evans

APRIL 2004

REPORT FOR Michael Brown & Sharon Evans
16 St George's Road
Wallingford
Oxfordshire
OX10 8HL

PREPARED BY John Moore

FIELDWORK 27 March 2004

REPORT ISSUED 28 April 2004

ENQUIRES TO John Moore Heritage Services
Long White Cloud
Waterperry Road
Holton
Oxfordshire OX33 1PW

*Telephone/Fax 01865 876637
Email: jmhs99@hotmail.com*

JMHS Project No. 1408
Project Code WSGR 04
Oxon Museums Accession No. 2004.30

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>SUMMARY</i>	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	
1.2 Planning Background	
1.3 Archaeological Background	
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	3
3 STRATEGY	3
3.1 Research Design	
3.2 Methodology	
4 RESULTS	4
5 FINDS	6
6 DISCUSSION	6
7 BIBLIOGRAPHY	7
 FIGURES	
Figure 1 Site Location	2
Figure 2 Plan of Investigations	4
Figure 3 Section 1	5

Summary

A watching brief carried out during the excavation for footings for a new garage encountered the west edge of the Saxon burgh ditch. This investigation resolved an anomaly arising from the earlier watching brief during the building of the new house on the same plot. It was thought that there was another ditch further to the west on a similar alignment to defensive ditch. This is now known to have been part of the Saxon defensive ditch.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Fig. 1)

The site is located on the east side of St George's Road, Wallingford (NGR SU 60433 89753). The area of investigation was situated in the north-east part of the plot of No. 16. The underlying geology is recorded as Thames River Terrace Gravels and the site is located at c. 50m OD.

1.2 Planning Background

South Oxfordshire District Council had granted planning permission for the construction of new garage. A condition was attached requiring that a programme of archaeological work should be carried out in association with the development. As the site lies on the edge of Scheduled Ancient Monument 234, the defensive bank and ditch of the Saxon burgh, Scheduled Monument Consent (HSB/9/2/5843, dated 12 November 2003) was obtained from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (OCMS). John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS) in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Investigation* agreed with the County Archaeological Service, on behalf of the local planning authority, and English Heritage, on behalf of OCMS, carried out the watching brief.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The site of the new garage lay immediately to the west of SAM 234, the bank and ditch of the Saxon burgh. The eastern boundary of the property lies on the present outer lip of the defensive ditch. The watching brief (JMHS 2001) carried out during the building of the new house on this site thought that that the original edge of the ditch was only 1m – 3m further west than at present (Fig. 2, 017). This has now been revised (see Discussion below).

The watching brief carried out during the building of the new house located a large ditch on the west side of the property (Fig. 2, 006), which is considered to be related to the boundary that is marked on the 1st edition OS map of 1877. A further feature, termed the 'middle' ditch was also recorded (Fig. 2, 013).

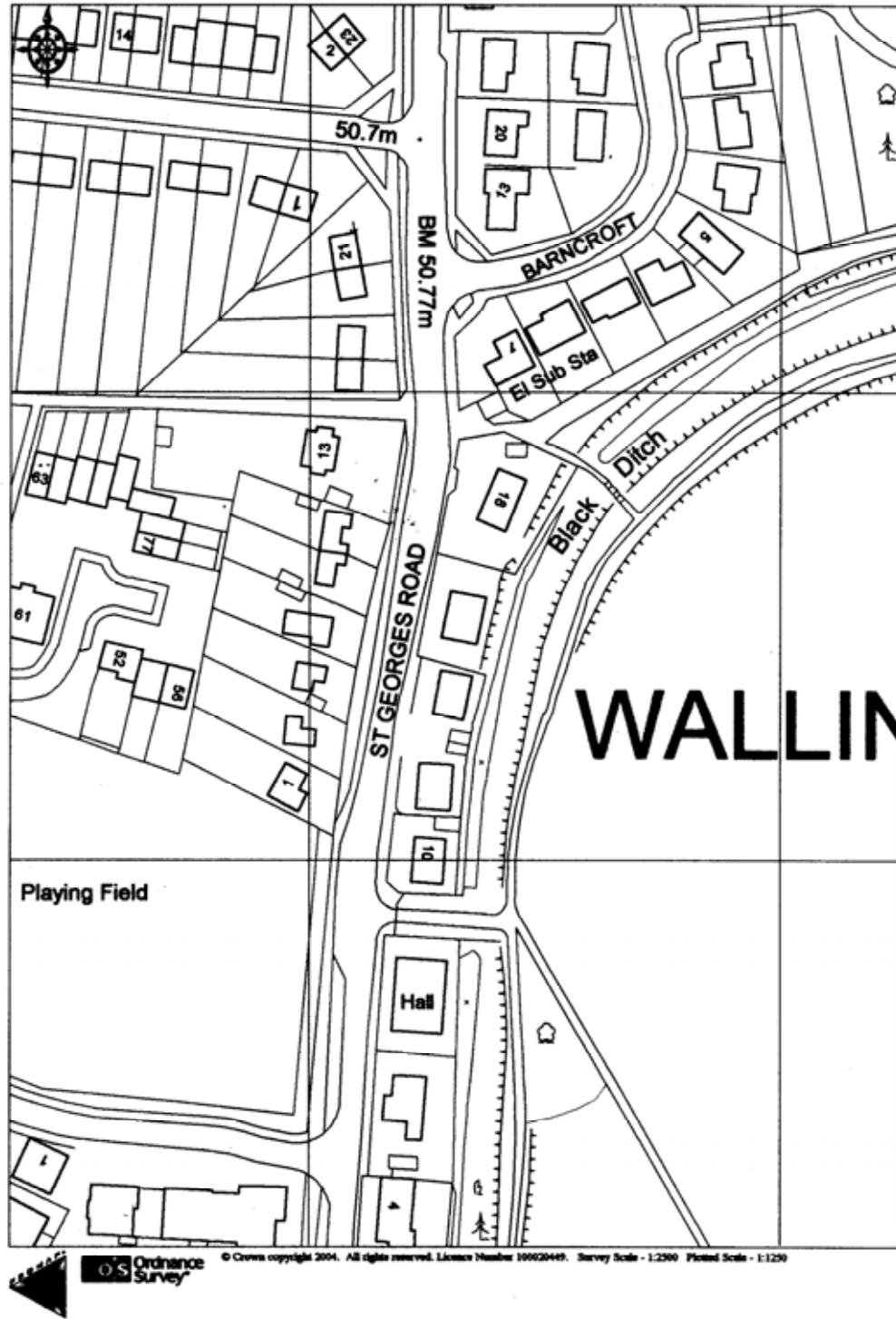


Figure 1: Site Location

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 record the line of the Saxon defensive ditch
 - To record the line of the 'middle' ditch in order to attempt to understand its nature and date
- 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 excavation of the trenches for the footings.

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

The east, north and part of the south foundation trench were excavated mechanically while the rest of the south trench was hand excavated. The excavation of the south-west part of the foundation was not observed as this had been partly disturbed by the excavation for services and was immediately adjacent to the trench excavation observed for the new house. The trench was excavated to a depth of c. 1m.

4 RESULTS

Deposits and fills are referred to in the text and figures in brackets (100), cut features are numbers in square brackets [111]. Figure 2 shows the plan of this investigation related to that of the earlier watching brief.

The natural geology comprised pale green clayey sand (110). Cut into this was the original outer edge of the Saxon burgh ditch [111], which was some 6.5m further west than at present. The top 650 mm of the side of the ditch was exposed, lying at an angle of 45⁰. The earliest fill seen lying on the side of the ditch (Fig. 3) was a

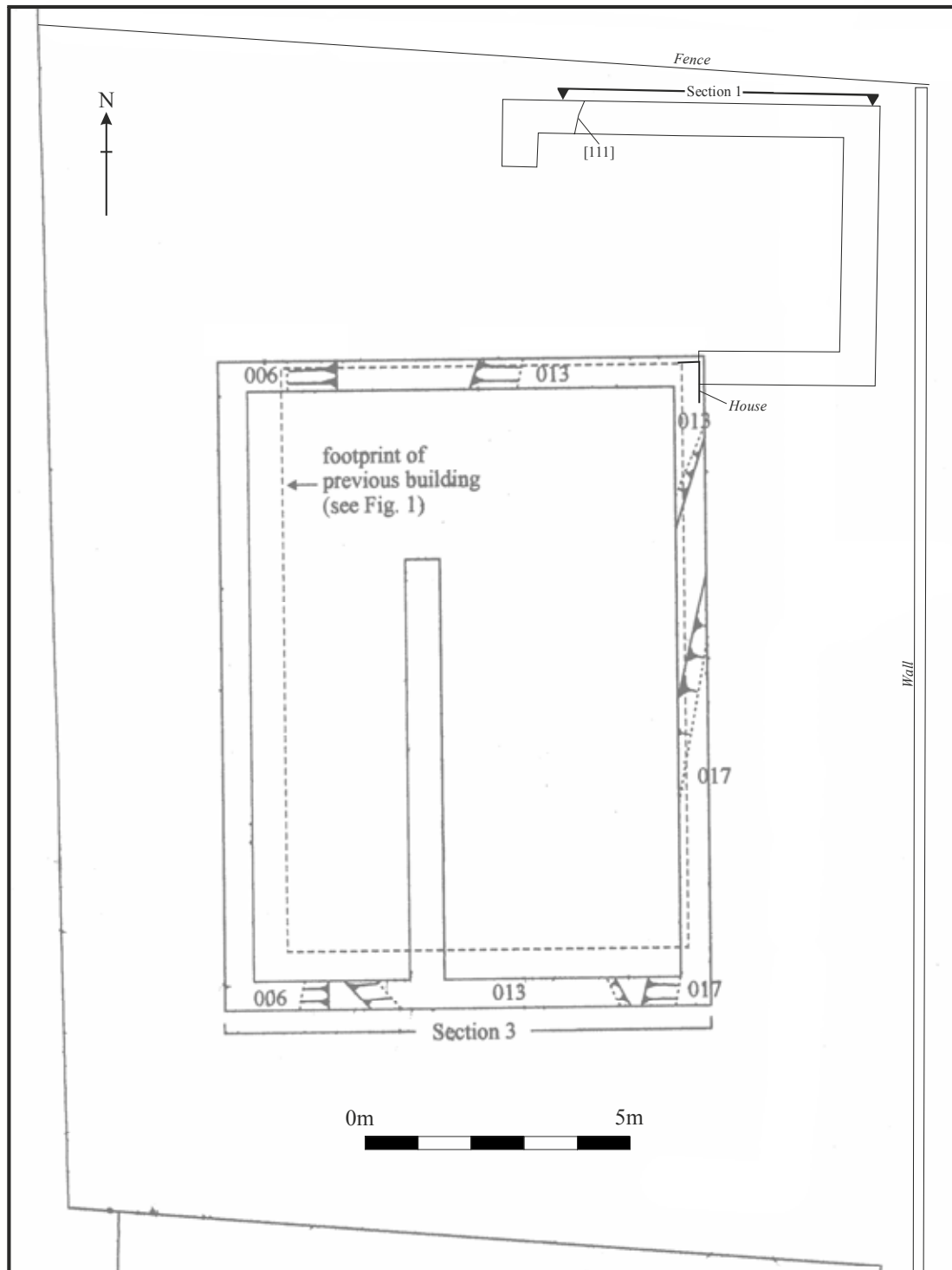


Figure 2. Plan of Investigations

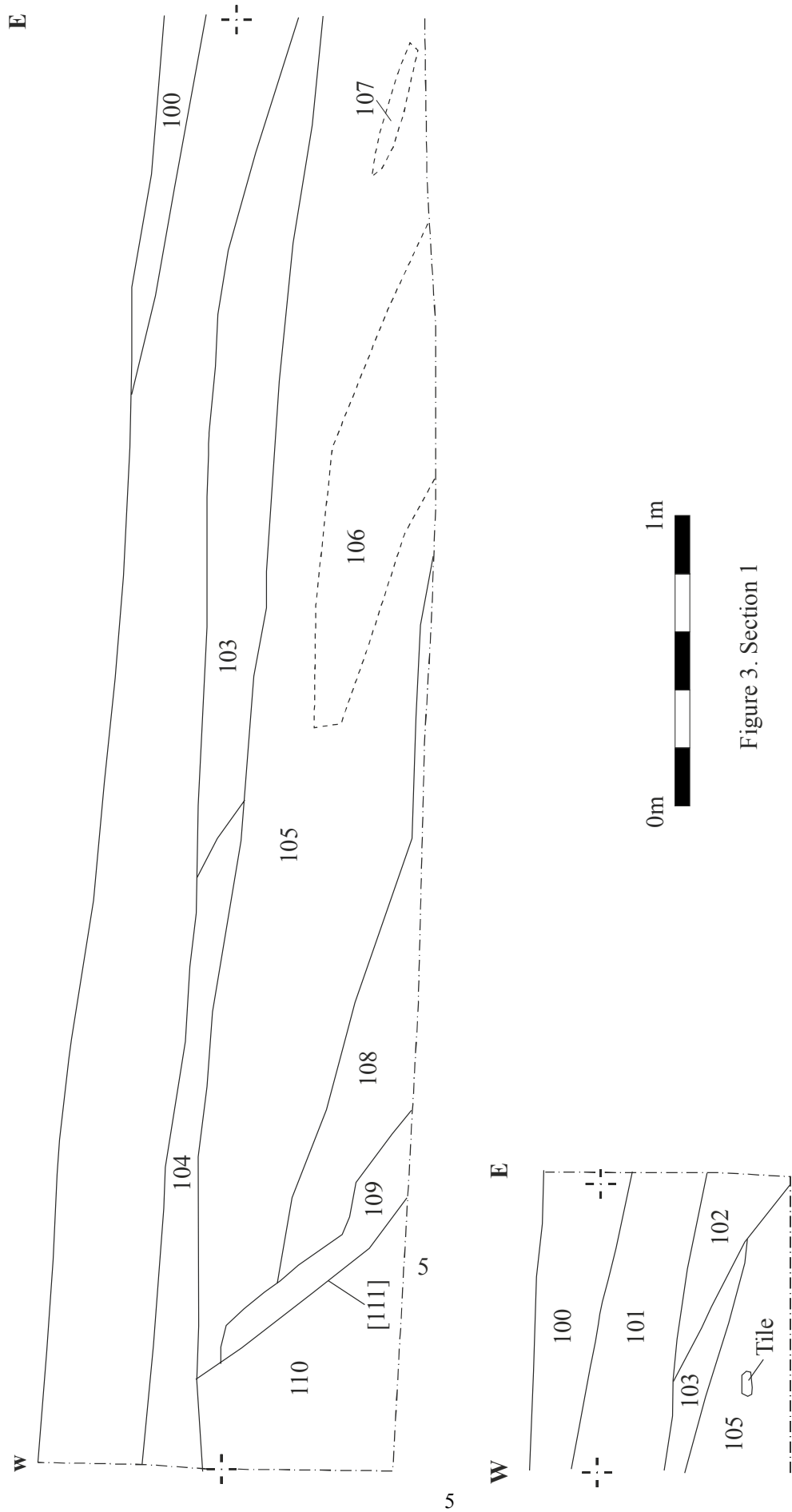


Figure 3. Section 1

moderately loose mid brown silty sand with less than 1% small angular stone (109). It had a very 'clean' appearance and was up to 150 mm thick. Overlying this was a mid brown (slightly red) and pale grey 20:80 sandy silty clay up to 300 mm thick (108). It is possible that this deposit was a mix of deposit 105 with other material.

The main fill of the upper part of the ditch, as seen, was a deposit of pale grey-white clay with lumps of claystone (105) containing large lenses of other material (106, 107). The maximum thickness of this deposit, as seen, was 600 mm. The lenses comprised moderately loose pale brown-orange sandy silty clay with very occasional small hard lumps of pale grey-white claystone (106) and loose ginger-brown sandy silt (107).

Overlying the ditch fill (105) was a deposit of mid brown-orange sandy silty clay containing 1% small rounded stone, which was 100 – 200 mm thick (104). This only occurred in the western part of the area with a deposit of pale brown-orange sandy silty clay with occasional small rounded stone and c. 1% very small (1-2 mm in diameter) chalk particles (103) to the east. This last deposit was 160 – 260 mm thick.

Overlying the last deposit and being present only on the extreme eastern edge of the investigation area was a layer of pale orange brown silty clay that was at least 300 mm thick (102). Sealing this was a 280 – 320 mm thick topsoil composed of dark grey sandy silt that was lighter in colour with depth. Along the eastern 2.5 m of the footprint of the garage was a levelling deposit of gravel, clay and gravelly clay up to 350 mm thick (100).

5 FINDS

Only two artefacts were found during the work. They were a small piece of tile and a piece of animal bone. Both derived from deposit 105.

6 DISCUSSION

The watching brief carried out during work for the new garage has established that the outer edge of the Saxon defensive ditch is [111 and 013]. It lies some 6.5 m further to the west making the ditch c. 17-19 m wide at this point on the circuit, comparable to what exists today further to the north.

The western part of the ditch that is within the property of No. 16 St George's Road has been deliberately backfilled with deposits (105-107) and probably (108). Deposit (104) must have been the original material overlying the natural at the time of the backfilling and presumably has been spread across the top of the backfill by cultivation. In this case deposit (103) must also have been laid down as a cultivation soil at the time of the backfilling.

The edge of the defensive ditch following the land reclamation is represented by the lower part of the edge of 102 (Fig. 3), with (103) slipping over the edge of the ditch, and 017 (Fig. 2). From examination of the Ordnance Survey maps it would appear

that the ditch was narrower at this point, at the time of the First Edition map of 1877, and an 18 m wide plot of land existed alongside the defensive ditch with a boundary and track to the west.

Deposit (102) is further backfilling probably from the time of the building of the first house when the rear property boundary was established. Topsoil (101) must derive from the time of the building of the first house on this site to form a garden deposit. Material (100) was levelling material, possibly for the sitting of a caravan during the building of the new house.

The reason for the confusion over the so-called middle ditch during the watching brief for the house construction was brought about by the fact that the base of the ditch was not seen and the clean nature of some of the deliberate backfill material in the west edge of the defensive ditch. Tip lines of dirtier material within this backfill material gave the impression of a further ditch where one was not present.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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

John Moore Heritage Services 2001, An Archaeological Watching Brief at 16 St George's Road, Wallingford, SU 60433 89753.

