



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**THE PRIORY, CHURCH LANE,**

**THATCHAM, BERKSHIRE**

**AN**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**NGR SU 51640 67284**

*On behalf of  
Thatcham Town Council*

**APRIL 2016**

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<b>REPORT FOR</b>	Thatcham Town Council c/o Reg Ellis + Associates The Blacksmiths Shop Old Silk Mill Chipping Camden Gloucestershire GL55 6DS
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**CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Historical & Archaeological Background	1
<b>2. AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. STRATEGY</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1 Research Design	6
3.2 Methodology	6
<b>4. RESULTS</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1 Pre – Watching Brief Excavations	7
4.2 Watching Brief Excavations	8
4.3 Electric Cable Trench Excavations	8
4.4 Soakaway Excavations	9
4.5 Gas Pipe Trench Excavations	11
<b>5. FINDS</b>	<b>12</b>
5.1 Pottery <i>by Paul Blinkhorn</i>	12
5.2 Brick & Tile <i>by Simona Denis</i>	13
5.3 Animal Bone <i>by Simona Denis</i>	15
5.4 Clay Tobacco Pipe <i>by Simona Denis</i>	15
<b>6. DISCUSSION</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>7. ARCHIVE</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>8. BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>17</b>

**FIGURES AND PLATES**

Figure 1. Site Location	2
Figure 2. Site Plan and Sections	10
Plate 1. Brick Well	7
Plate 2. Foundation Trenches. West View	8
Plate 3. Section 2. WSW View	9

## **SUMMARY**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief at The Priory, Church Lane, Thatcham, Berkshire. Due to an oversight the foundations for the extension, foundations for the new w/c, the stripping of the car park area, and a number of service trenches were excavated without the presence of an archaeologist. These excavations revealed a brick-built well but the presence or absence of any other archaeological features during this period of excavation remains unknown. Later archaeological observance during the excavation of a number of service trenches identified areas of made up ground on the east, and SE side of the building which were just below the present ground level. These contained pottery dating to the post medieval period and the 19<sup>th</sup> century, along with brick, tile and animal bone. A pit or ditch filled with brick and tile was identified near to the SW corner of the building and a deep buried layer which contained a frequent inclusion of brick and tile was also identified towards the SW corner of the building. A levelling layer of brick and tile with Victorian pottery was identified below the present driveway approximately 2.5m away from the entrance gate to the Priory, and a narrow brick wall orientated along the same line as the iron gate posts was identified at the entrance to the site.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The Priory (NGR SU 5164067284) is situated c. 40m north St Mary's Church and lies to the west of the town centre. The geology is Thatcham Gravel (Third Terrace).

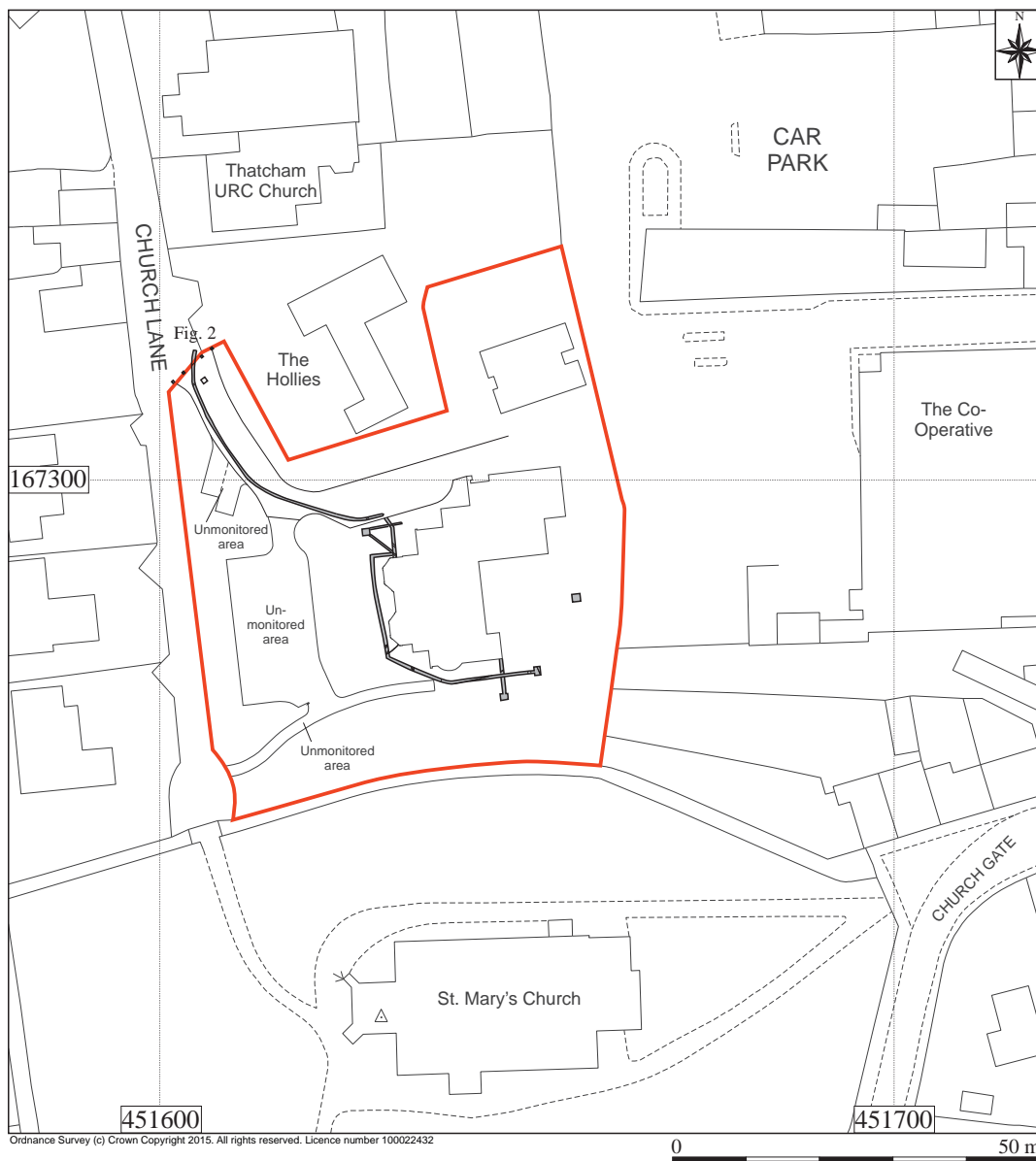
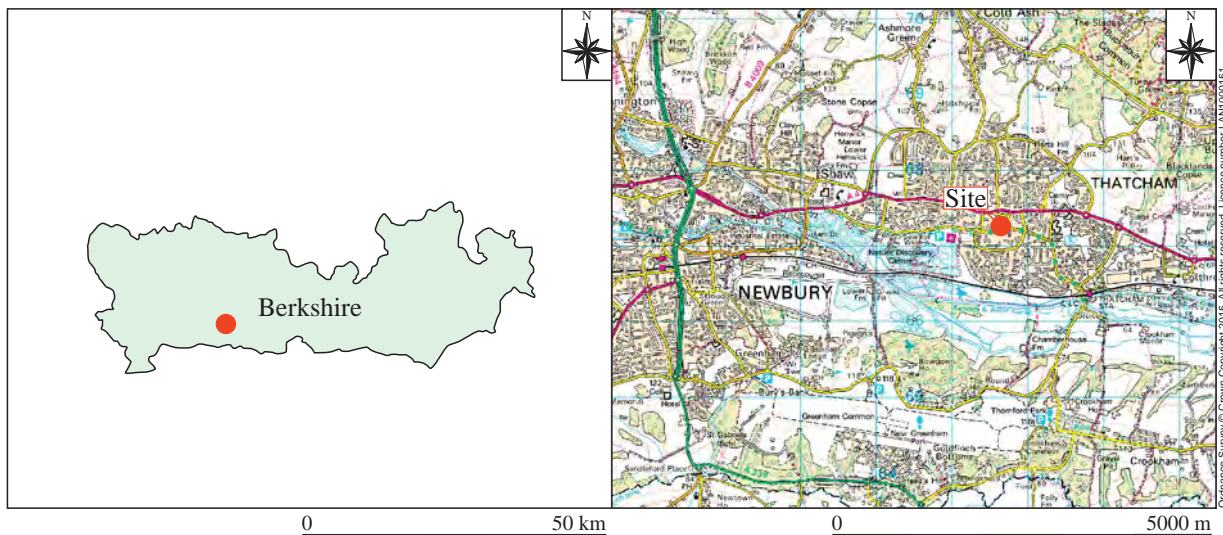
### **1.2 Planning Background**

West Berkshire Council granted planning permission for conversion of Grade II listed building to offices for Thatcham Town Council with two suites of offices to let. Alterations to the building will include the provision of a disabled platform lift, an extension for a meeting/events room, and an extension for an accessible w/c. Due to the potential presence of archaeological remains a condition for a programme of archaeological works was attached. A Written Scheme of Investigation has agreed with West Berkshire Council Archaeological Service (WBCAS) and submitted to West Berkshire Council.

### **1.3 Historical & Archaeological Background**

The historical and archaeological background has been obtained from the referenced sources and from the West Berkshire Historic Environment Records (West Berkshire HER 04/02/2015a; 04/02/2015b). References preceded by the letters MWB refer to HER the monument reference, and those preceded by EWB refer to the HER Event reference number.

The settlement in the Thatcham area can be traced back to prehistory. A Roman roadside settlement also grew up in the west of the area now occupied by a modern town (Thames Valley Archaeological Service (TVAS) 2007). It is, however, in the middle Saxon period that the origins of the current urban area appear to lie.



Key  Site boundary  Monitored area

Figure 1: Site location

The study site is located in the grounds of the Priory a Grade II listed building dated to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Priory lies immediately north of the parish church of St Mary's which is mainly 13<sup>th</sup> century but was largely rebuilt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The projected course of Ermin Street could pass through the zone in the vicinity of St Mary's Church. Roman pottery has also been recovered in the area of the church (MWB10016). There is documentary evidence to suggest that it was the site of a Saxon Minster (a high status religious complex and church) and that there was a royal estate in the zone. The Domesday reference to Thatcham suggests that by the end of the Saxon period it had become an important religious and administrative centre with royal connections; and was the centre of a hundred and the site of a Minster church (MWB3535, MWB3537). Astill (1978) concluded that by the time of the Norman Conquest the settlement had a 'proto-urban' status. It has been considered that the predominantly 13<sup>th</sup> century St Mary's is the likely location of the Saxon Minster but the evidence is patchy and the nature and extent of settlement is unclear. Trial excavations at 21-23 Broadway (EWB496) failed to locate Saxon material and this, perhaps, casts doubt on Astill's (1978) theory that the Saxon settlement was located on higher ground around the church, located along the Roman road and/or along Church Lane. In contrast it has been suggested that the Saxon settlement may not be located near to the church but in an area east of the church; that is, in modern terms along Station Road and the south end of Broadway (MWB3538; MWB3539; Asthill 1978; Horton 1979).

The growth of the town in the later medieval period was stimulated by its gift to the Abbey at Reading in about 1121-23 (MWB3537). The Abbey appears to have decided to maximise the potential of their new asset by creating a new market centre and reorganising the town with the laying out of the Broadway, east of the church, to attract economic activity. The records suggest that despite some growth the market was out-competed by the newer and by now larger neighbour at Newbury (MWB3535). Thatcham appears to have ceased as a borough by the 16th century, although it continued as a large rural settlement.

Immediately to the west of the Priory Berkshire County Council archaeologists were given the opportunity to record and remove any archaeological remains on land next to Monks Chambers, Church Lane in June and July 1986. No features were visible and only 2 sherds of post-medieval pot were recovered (EWB1151).

A watching brief at the Priory carried out during the construction of 'The Hub' discovered a possible linear ditch located in one of the pits excavated for the footings to the building (Cotswold Archaeological Trust 2001). The fill contained a residual sherd of medieval pottery and fragments of post medieval brick and tile but no Anglo-Saxon material was recovered. The base of a small pit was also revealed in the section of another footing but contained no finds.

During an archaeological watching brief at The Hollies, Church Lane, one or two features were revealed cutting the gravel at a depth of 0.83m. No finds were recovered from these features but it has been considered that they may have been part of a boundary layout pre-dating the nearby medieval burgrave plots (EWB1300).

Just south of Church Gate various archaeological investigations have produced evidence for possible prehistoric, Roman, and medieval activity. A slight negative earthwork on the south side of Church Gate House has been tentatively identified as the remains of a moated enclosure. The vicarage and its lands are described in a terrier of 1634 (Mortimer 1995); there is mention of a moat, with the house, other buildings and to gardens within it, and a three bay barn, hayhouse and yard 'without the Moate next the high waye'.

An archaeological evaluation was carried out in the garden of Church Gate House where new houses were proposed (JMHS 2009). This work and the follow up excavation (TVAS 2011) revealed a ditch that ran into the site from the north-east. It was cut by another ditch; neither contained any artefacts but they were likely to be 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century in date. Three phases of medieval use of the Church Gate House site were identified, including quarrying and land division. A quantity of Roman building material was recovered, but this all appeared to be residual. However the presence of a possible box flue tile and *bessales* (supports for hypocaust floors) suggested a building of high status, somewhere in the vicinity.

A series of investigations on sites to the east of Church Gate House have revealed a number of archaeological features and deposits (Pine 2010, 34 – 44). To the rear of 12 Church Gate, an evaluation found one ditch of unusual width (*c.* 4m) that contained several sherds of medieval pottery and is likely to date from the 12th century. A second smaller ditch with re-cut, produced rare middle Saxon pottery (Ipswich Ware) along with a moderate assemblage of animal bone. It was not clear whether this ditch was of middle Saxon date or simply contained residual finds, but the presence of two sherds of Ipswich Ware was of note, and may indicate the presence of a high status site (EWB763).

During a subsequent watching brief the creation of the access road involved ground reduction of a large area, and several features were revealed: a possible ditch terminal or pit (probably medieval or later), and two similar parallel narrow gullies containing small amounts of animal bone and burnt flint. These could be prehistoric but equally might be Saxon. A single medieval sherd was also recovered from the access road area. Further to the south-west, several inter-cutting features were observed and mapped but not excavated, as they would be preserved *in situ* by the road construction. A curving 2m wide ditch contained two pieces of early-middle Saxon pottery on its surface, and seemed to be a re-cut of another ditch. Both contained charcoal flecks. A further two features (one a wide ditch, the other of uncertain nature) were truncated by the ditch recut, and a possible pit was partially revealed. Another ditch aligned east-west may have been a continuation of the recut ditch. The footings for the three house plots were observed, and one revealed a post-medieval ditch aligned north-south and containing some tile and pottery. In a second plot, the medieval ditch recorded in the evaluation was further exposed, and was seen to be at least 5m in length north-south, and 4.5m in width east-west (EWB847).

At 12-14 Church Gate an excavation, which followed on from an earlier evaluation (Milbank & Pine 2006), revealed ditches, pits and postholes of late 12<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> century date. Added to the previous work in the area, this indicates a high density of medieval occupation evidence to the south of St Mary's Church, although no building plans or structures were exposed. Residual sherds of Bronze Age, Roman and early/middle Saxon date were also recovered. The Saxon hand-built wares were

undecorated so could only be broadly dated to 450-850 AD, but their presence on the site (combined with the earlier discovery of two sherds of Ipswich ware) shows that there was some sort of settlement at Thatcham at least 120 years before the place was granted to King Edgar in 971AD.

At 10-11 Church Gate a watching brief found some residual sherds of a 12<sup>th</sup> century flint tempered cooking vessel from modern garden soil. The lack of evidence for Saxon or medieval occupation was surprising given the site's location, but may be explained by the alluvial deposits suggesting that the area had suffered flooding in the past, and have therefore been of only marginal agricultural use (EWB765).

At 17 Church Gate, west of Church Gate House, an evaluation produced two small pits or postholes of uncertain date, two ditches possibly of late medieval date, one large cesspit dated late 14<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> century. In addition one residual Neolithic or Bronze Age flint flake and fragments of possible Roman tile represented earlier activities on the site or within the area (JMHS 2013).

At 7-8 Broadway an archaeological evaluation was undertaken that found a shallow flat based feature with a tiled floor. Stratigraphically below this feature was a wall foundation, constructed with flint nodules and chalk lumps in a sandy matrix. The tiled floor might relate to the 19<sup>th</sup> century use of the premises as a carriage works, but the date of the earlier structure was unknown (EWB1080; Thames Valley Archaeological Services 2008). A further evaluation at 29 High Street found a truncated ditch of unknown date (EWB1331).

## **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 revealed by the groundworks.
- The Historic Environment Character Zone for Thatcham Historic Core gives the following research potential:
- Can the line of the Roman road be established? Is there any Romano-British settlement activity in the zone?
- What was the date, location and status of the first early medieval (Saxon) settlement?
- Where was the location of the early medieval settlement? Can its character be established? Does the discovery of Ipswich ware pottery provide an indication of the status of the site?
- How and when did the later medieval settlement expand away from the area around the church? When was the Broadway laid out? What was the status of the later medieval settlement? Why did the town not succeed in the medieval period?



- What is the date and significance of the historic building stock in the town?

### **3 STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation (JMHS 2015) that had been approved by West Berkshire Council Archaeological Service (WBCAS)

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014).

#### **3.2 Methodology**

The archaeological condition required an archaeologist to be present on the site during the course of any groundwork that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains. Due to an oversight, the foundations for the extension, foundations for the new w/c, the stripping of the car park area, and a number of service trenches were excavated without the presence of an archaeologist. The time between these excavations taking place and the archaeologist being informed of the excavations was such that backfilling and concrete pouring had already taken place and there was thus no opportunity to observe the open excavations. Photographs of the excavations were provided by the contactor, and the contract management and staff provided details of excavations, trench depths and information on features and material that had been encountered. The surface of the site and the surface of spoil heaps were also examined for artefacts.

An archaeologist was present for the remaining excavations which were observed either to the top of the natural or the required depth of excavation if this was higher in the profile. An electrical cable trench was extended downward beyond the required depth onto the natural soil horizon in order that it might reveal any continuous features that might, in more favourable circumstances, have been identified during the excavation of the new foundations.

Any archaeological deposits and features revealed were cleaned by hand and recorded in plan before being excavated and recorded at an appropriate level. Any archaeological features or other remains i.e. concentrations of artefacts were recorded by written, drawn and photographic record.

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.

## 4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

All layers, deposits and features were given a unique context number. Numbers in brackets represent layers, deposits and fills. Numbers in **bold** represent masonry features and number without brackets refer to cut features.

### 4.1 Pre -Watching Brief Excavations

Due to an oversight, the archaeological contractor was not informed of the commencement of excavations. This meant that there was no archaeological watching brief conducted during the excavation of the foundations to the new build extensions or related ground reductions, no observance during the excavation of the parking area to the west of the site, and no archaeological observance of any service trenches excavated up until after the archaeologist was requested to attend site on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2015.

Photographs were provided by the building contractors for inspection by the archaeologist and whilst the photographs did not provide evidence for all the excavations it was possible to note the presence of a brick-built well in the south west corner of the extension footing trench (Fig 2. Plate 1). From what else could be observed from the photographs, there was no strong evidence that would indicate that the extension foundations had revealed any archaeological features but the potential for accurate observance was limited. There was a possible indication of a feature, possibly a linear feature, in the NE corner of the foundations but the smearing of the section made this impossible to ascertain from the photograph (Plate 2). No photographs for the internal platform reduction to the extension were available and the photographs of the foundations for the w/c were also limited in their usefulness, the presence or absence of archaeological features in these areas is thus entirely unknown.



Plate 1. Brick well.

The spoil heaps, that were extant at the time of the first site visit, were examined for any archaeological inclusions. No medieval pottery was observed in any of the spoil heaps, and most of the material present were fragments of brick and tile of late post-

medieval or modern date. A few small items of pottery were observed that were of 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century date but were not recovered from the spoil. It was only practical to examine the outer layer of the spoil heap, and so any conclusions regarding the artefact content of the excavations were limited.



Plate 2. Foundation trenches. West view

## 4.2 Watching Brief Excavations

Following the initial archaeologically unobserved excavations, there was a programme of final excavations. These included an electric cable trench and a number of drainage ditches and soakaways, and the excavation of a gas pipe trench.

## 4.3 Electric Cable Trench Excavations

During the excavation of the electric cable trench the lowest layer identified was a layer of light orange and brown sub-angular, flint and gravel which was identified as the natural (2). Above this was a layer of mid grey brown soil that was clayey in appearance (3). It was 0.3m thick, had a frequent inclusion of small flint and also contained a very frequent inclusion of brick and tile. This layer was only identified towards the western end of the cable trench and was observed in section for a length of 4m at this end of the trench (Fig 2). The ground dropped very slightly in this area and there may have been a very shallow ditch or a pit. Deposited above this layer was 0.5m to 0.7m thick layer of very dark brown sandy loam with a moderate inclusion of fine angular flint gravel (1). In most of the areas to the south and east of the site this layer was identified as one homogenous layer sitting above the natural gravel in a simple two layer soil profile (Fig 2. Section1). This layer, however, was probably two or more deposits that could not always be differentiated visually. This was evidenced by intermittent layers in Soakaways 1 and 2 (see below). The layer was identified as a deep topsoil layer.

In the area of the cable trench that was excavated along the western front of the building, the lowest layer identified above the natural gravel (2) was a 0.2m to 0.3m

thick layer of very dark brown sandy loam (8). This layer may have been the same as layer (1) but it appeared to have a higher gravel content than (1). It was identified as the vestiges of a thick topsoil layer that had been buried under later made up ground. Deposited above (8) was a 0.3m thick layer of mid grey brown sandy loam (7) which contained frequent inclusions of angular flint. The layer contained fragments of brick and tile which were not retained. Cut into this layer towards the NW corner of the building was the remains of a large pit or maybe a wide ditch, cut 6 (Fig 2. Section 2; Plate 3). The pit seemed to be cut on the north side of a line of kerbing stones that defined an area previously set aside for car parking. In section the cut was 1.25m wide and 0.6m in depth. It had concave sides and was filled with fill (5) which had a very dominant inclusion of broken brick and tile. Deposited above this layer was a 0.2m to 0.4m thick layer of loose orange and yellow gravel (4). This layer may have been recently laid following the removal of tarmac in the area to create a temporary surface.



Plate 3. Section 2. WSW view

#### 4.4 Soakaway Excavations

The excavation of three soakaways was observed around the site. Due to the shallow depth of the drainage pipe trenches associated with some of these trenches, it was decided that not all the trenches needed watching as they did not penetrate below the topsoil.

In Soakaway 1 the lowest layer identified was layer (2) the natural gravel. Deposited above this was the thick topsoil layer, (1). This layer appeared to be 0.9m thick in the south and east sections but in the north and west sections was 0.5m to 0.6m thick. In these sections layer (10), a 0.34m thick deposit of fine, light yellow gravel mixed with mid to dark brown sandy loam was deposited above (1) (Fig. 2, Section 3). Layer (10) was possibly a levelling layer and it separated layer (1) from a 0.15m thick layer of very dark brown sandy loam topsoil (9). In the south and east sections the horizon between layers (1) and (9) could not be identified visually or texturally.





Figure 2: Site Plan and Sections

In Soakaway 2, layer (1) was between 0.4m and 0.5m thick. Deposited above this was a 0.1m to 0.15m thick layer of mid brown sandy loam with a dominant inclusion of fine light yellow gravel (12) (Fig.2, Section 4). The deposit contained fragments of pottery, brick and tile, and a fragment of clay tobacco pipe stem. This layer was visible in the west section of the soakaway but extended into the adjacent sections by only 0.1m or less and was absent from the east section. It is possible that this layer was a levelling layer and may have been continuous with layer (10) observed in Soakaway 1. Deposited above this was a 0.35m of dark brown sandy loam (11). This layer could not be separated visually from layer (1) except where (1) and (11) were clearly separated by layer (12).

In Soakaway 3 on the NW side of the building the lowest layer identified was the natural gravel (2). Deposited above this was (15), a layer of soft, very dark brown sandy loam that was similar to layers (1), (8), (9) & (12) in appearance. Deposited above this was (14) a friable mid grey brown sandy loam. It contained frequent stone and brick and tile. It was 0.25m to 0.3m deep and was identified as made up ground. Above this was a thin 0.2m layer of mid grey brown, wet loamy sand which contained a dominant inclusion of gravel and brick and tile (13). This layer of overburden was identified as a disturbed layer that had been created by recent site operations.

#### **4.5 Gas Pipe Trench Excavations**

A gas service pipe trench was excavated from the NW side of the building due north and then along the driveway towards the NW and through the gateway to the Priory.

From the NW of the building for 5.5m of the trench, three soil horizons were identified. The lowest layer was the natural gravel (2). Deposited above this was (15) a dark buried sandy loam which had previously been identified in this area. Deposited above this layer was a very sodden layer of loamy sand (16). This layer was in a very disturbed area where contexts (13) (14) had been previously identified. These layers had been churned up into one homogenous mix during later stages of the development resulting in context (16). The area was previously disturbed by recent drainage and earlier services.

The gas service trench continued along the driveway towards the NW. Towards the easterly end of the trench four layers were identified deposited above the natural gravel (2). The lowest of these layers was (15) a 0.4m thick layer of dark brown sandy loam identified as a buried topsoil layer. Deposited above this was a layer of mid brown, very gravelly, loamy sand (19). The layer was 0.3m thick and contained fragments of undiagnostic ceramic building material. The soil was identified as an area of made up ground and deposited above this was a 0.2m layer of friable, very dark brown sandy soil (18). The soil had a spongy texture indicating a sizable inclusion of organic matter. This layer probably indicated a garden soil in an area formerly to the north of the original drive edge, or it may have been a spread of material recently deposited from elsewhere on the site. Deposited on top of this layer was of a 0.1 to 0.2m thick, light grey brown layer dominated by angular stone (17). The layer was identified as a levelling layer for the driveway that had been recently laid over the old tarmac.

Further to the west and NW along the gas service trench the stratigraphy changed. The lowest layer identified above the natural gravel (2) was a 0.3 to 0.4m thick layer of dark brown sandy loam (27). This layer was possibly continuous with (15) and other buried topsoil layers across the site but appeared more mid grey brown in places and may have been more mixed and disturbed. Deposited above this was a mid orange coarse sand and gravel layer (21) which was 0.3m to 0.5m thick. This was a levelling layer for the tarmac drive surface (20). The layer of tarmac was between 0.1m and 0.3m thick and was thinner and more fragmentary towards the east of the trench. Deposited above the tarmac was recent gravel levelling layer (17).

Nearer to the gateway to the Priory an earlier levelling layer (24) was identified. This layer was made up almost entirely from ceramic tile and brick and contained a small amount of 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery. The layer was deposited above (27) and was between 0.1 and 0.2m thick. The deposit was laid in an area approximately 2.5m south from the gateway and continued south along the drive for approximately 4.5m, layer (21) was deposited above it.

A trench for a pipe running to a manhole, cut 26, was identified further towards the gate. The cut was 1.5m wide and was backfilled with a mid grey brown fill (25) which contained a single fragment of pottery.

A wall, **22**, was identified as the gas service trench was cut through the gateway. It was aligned east -west along the line of the four rectangular iron gateposts that form part of the current gateway, the wall may relate to its construction or perhaps[s an earlier gateway.

Beyond the gateway the area was heavily disturbed by multiple service trenches and gravel backfills and it was considered unnecessary to continue watching the trench for the remaining 5m.

## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 7 sherds with a total weight of 513g. It was all post-medieval. The following wares were noted:

**GRE: Red Earthenware**, 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century (Brears 1969). Fine sandy earthenware, usually with a brown or green glaze, occurring in a range of utilitarian forms. Such 'country pottery' was first made in the 16th century, and in some areas continued in use until the 19th century. 2 sherds, 186g.

**MET: Metropolitan-type Slipware**, 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> C. Similar fabric to Red Earthenware, with geometric designs in white slip under the glaze. Produced at a number of centres, but particularly Harlow in Essex (Davey and Walker 2009). 1 sherd, 51g.

**MOD: Miscellaneous 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century wares**. Mass-produced white earthenwares, stonewares, flower-pots, etc. 4 sherds, 276g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. The two sherds from context (12) are both somewhat abraded, and could easily be residual.

*Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type*

Context	GRE		MET		MOD		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
1					2	257	MOD
12	1	68	1	51			17thC
24					2	19	MOD
25	1	118					M16thC
Total	2	186	1	51	4	276	

## 5.2 Brick and Tile by Simona Denis

A total of 29 ceramic building material fragments, of a combined weight of 12520 g, was collected from 7 individual contexts. The material was recorded by context, divided by type and fabric, counted, measured and weighed.

The state of preservation of the items is generally fair, although extremely fragmentary, the only complete object recovered being the single brick found in context (22).

The majority (55%) of the assemblage is composed by roof tiles, while bricks represent the remaining 45% of the total.

11 different fabrics were observed:

1. Dark pink-orange, relatively smooth sandy fabric with occasional small inclusions
2. Orange-pink, gritty, rough sandy fabric with frequent small to medium inclusions
3. Orange-pink smooth sandy fabric, virtually no inclusions
4. Orange-pink, smooth sandy fabric with frequent small and occasional medium-sized inclusions
5. Dark red, smooth sandy fabric with grey core and rare small to medium inclusions
6. Light pink-orange, smooth fabric with very frequent small inclusions concentrated on the surface
  - a. With grey core
7. Dark-pink, gritty fabric with grey core and small inclusions
8. Light pink-orange sandy fabric with medium-sized inclusions
9. Orange-pink, gritty with small and medium inclusions
  - a. With frequent small and medium inclusions
10. Dark-pink reddish, gritty fabric with frequent medium to large inclusions



## 11. Modern yellow fabric

Context	Type	Fabric	Weight (g)	Dimensions (mm) (LxWxT)	Comments	Date range
1	Brick	2	360	>41x100x60		?18 <sup>th</sup> C
	Peg tile	1	143	>100x>68x13	1 complete peg-hole in corner	13 <sup>th</sup> C -19 <sup>th</sup> C
			44	>57x>47x15	1 partial peg-hole	
		8	53	>72x>46x12	1 partial peg-hole in corner	
	Roof tile	1	219	>94x>88x16	Corner preserved	
		7	114	>83x>55x14		
3	Peg tile	4	111	>86x>73x14	1 complete peg-hole	
	Roof tile	3	153	>12x>83x13	Corner preserved. Traces of red glaze	
		4	165	>93x>96x14	Traces of red glaze	
		5	178	>150x>80x16	Raised edge	
		6	128	>92x>98x12		
		6a	302	>122x>127x14		
5	Brick	2	610	>60x101x66	2 corners preserved	18 <sup>th</sup> C
		10	745	>68x101x67		18 <sup>th</sup> C
		11	653	>68x>88x69	Embossed maker's mark (...) FF (...)	20 <sup>th</sup> C
	Roof tile	3	136	>99x>70x11		
	?Ridge tile	3	353	>170x>86x18	Curved	20 <sup>th</sup> C
12	Brick	2	372	>95x>43x69		?18 <sup>th</sup> C
22	Brick	1	2500	225x106x72	Complete. Traces of mortar	?18 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> C
24	Brick	1	675	>103x>92x46	Corner preserved	
			666	>67x103x55	2 corners preserved	?18 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> C
		2	683	>112x>78x50		?17 <sup>th</sup> C
	Peg tile	4	172	>105x>98x12	1 partial peg-hole	
	Roof tile	9a	204	>135x>66x12		
U/S	Brick	1	948	>106x105x61	Traces of mortar	?18 <sup>th</sup> C
		10	277	>92x>84x>45		
			735	>92x>94x65		19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> C
			518	>48x>101x65		19 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> C
	Roof tile	9	303	>176x>71x12		

Table 2: Ceramic building material

- **Brick**

A total of 13 brick fragments were recovered during the excavation.

With the exception of the single brick found in context (22), none of the examples was complete. 12 of the objects were preserved to their complete thickness (ranging between 46 and 72 mm), although only 6 maintained their full width, from a minimum of 100 to a maximum of 106 mm.

With the exception of the modern, embossed fragment from context (5), all of the bricks were handmade. Based on the preserved dimensions, the assemblage can tentatively dated to the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century (Hammond 1990).

- **Roof Tiles**

Clay plain tiles were developed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century to replace shingles and thatch in the roofing of domestic buildings. Handmade peg tiles were commonly used until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when machine-made tiles became popular, with little variation in the manufacturing technique. Also, good quality roof tiles were reused over long period of times; therefore, the potential for dating evidence of plain roof tiles remains limited.

Of the 16 clay roof tile fragments found, 5 were positively identified as peg tiles due to the presence of a partial or complete circular peg hole. Only two of these examples were placed close to the corner of the tile, suggesting that the tile was originally held in place by two pegs (<http://www.iadb.co.uk/>).

10 of the remaining fragments were identified as roof tiles, although the lack of evidence of peg holes or nibs prevents from a positive identification of the type. Two of the examples found in context (3) showed traces of red glaze on one of the surfaces.

A single curved, modern fragment was tentatively identified as ridge tile. It is not recommended to retain undiagnostic fragments.

### 5.3 **Animal Bone** by *Simona Denis*

Two fragments of animal bone from two different context were recovered during the excavations. No butchering or firing marks were observed.

Context	Identification	Type	Weight (g)
1	Cow	Proximal radius-ulna	144
3	Sheep/Goat	Costal groove with head	1.8

*Table 3: Animal bone*

It is not recommended to retain the animal bone assemblage due to its extremely limited potential for further analysis.

### 5.4 **Clay Tobacco Pipe** by *Simona Denis*

A single fragment of clay tobacco pipe stem was recovered from context (12). The item, manufactured with a mould, weighs 2.9 g and is preserved to a maximum length of 36 mm. The stem has a diameter of 8 mm and a centred bore hole measuring 2 mm.

Plain stem fragments without diagnostic features have very little dating value; however, a slightly later dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century is generally suggested for stems with a centred bore hole (Ayto 1994).

The fragment was not retained due to its extremely limited potential for further analysis.

## 6. DISUCSSION

Due to the limited opportunity for archaeological observance of the excavations at the Priory it is difficult to draw any strong conclusions about the archaeology of the site. The observed archaeology on the site was a brick-built well, which was only observed from photographs. The only other masonry feature recorded was a wall, **22**, which was identified in the gas service trench as it cut through the gateway. It was aligned east-west along the line of the four rectangular iron gateposts that form part of the current gateway. The sample brick taken from the wall was broadly dated between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century but may have been reused. The wall may relate to the construction of the gateway or to the construction of an earlier gateway. The remaining observed excavations revealed various layers of dumped material and made up ground. These recorded deposits and features would appear to be 19<sup>th</sup> century or later modern although the material from deposit (3) is broadly dated and so could be earlier. The earlier post medieval pottery found on the site was mostly found in several securely modern contexts, that was, either in the topsoil, the backfill of modern service trenches or in made-up ground containing 19<sup>th</sup> century material.

There was no material recovered from the excavations that was dated to the medieval or earlier and it is important to note its absence in relation to other excavations in the area. The absence of dateable archaeology or archaeology of a medieval date or earlier along Church Lane and within the ground of the Priory itself has been identified during earlier excavations. Directly west of the NW of the site, excavations on land adjacent to Monks Chambers recovered two sherds of post-medieval pottery (EWB1151). No features were identified and the ground make up was similar to that identified in the south and east of the Priory's grounds, that was, a deep 0.7m layer of dark loamy soil overlying gravel.

Within the grounds of the priory itself the possible ditch that was discovered during earlier excavations contained a sherd of medieval pottery but this was considered to be residual amongst later post-medieval material (EWB383). A pit that was found during these earlier excavations was undated.

Immediately north of the site at the Hollies, two features were found that were identified as having possibly formed part of a boundary system that predated the nearby medieval burgrave plots. No finds were recovered from the site, however, and the interpretation is considered conjectural (MWB20328). To the east of the site an excavation in 1979 at 21-23 Broadway had revealed seven undated features (EWB496). There were also seven pieces of medieval pottery recovered from the site but this was classed as residual.

In contrast, archaeological works south of St Mary's, that is, South of Church Gate have identified a number of features dating to the medieval period that are suggestive of quarrying and land division. Anglo Saxon pottery has also been recovered from ditches south of Church Gate and while some of this material may be residual the presence of Ipswich Ware pottery would suggest the possible presence of a high status site. The presence of a possible box flue tile and *bessales* also indicates the presence of a high status Roman period building nearby.

The negative archaeological evidence from the Priory may possibly support a theory that the focus of the Anglo Saxon period settlement of Thatcham was not focused on

this part of the town. The latest excavations at the Priory do show that excavations immediately north of St Mary's continue to recover very little dateable archaeology from the medieval period or earlier in comparison to excavations south of the church. This conclusion should however, not be considered, without acknowledging the limited opportunity for archaeological observance during these latest excavations.

## 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 Service under accession number NEBYM: 2015.44

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