

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

19, BRIDGE END, DORCHESTER-ON-THAMES,

OXFORDSHIRE

SU 5790 9370

On behalf of

Mr & Mrs J Nudds

JULY 2008

REPORT FOR Mr & Mrs J Nudds
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Summary

A watching brief was carried out by John Moore Heritage Services at Green Acre, 19 Bridge End, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire during the excavation of footings for a new conservatory. Topsoil overlying two levelling layers were observed, with the top of either the old topsoil or subsoil sealed below. No archaeological remains of significance were revealed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site lies on the eastern side of Bridge End in the southern part of Dorchester-on-Thames (NGR SU 5790 9370). The site was flat and in domestic use. The underlying geology is the junction of alluvium with Thames River Terrace Gravels. The site lies at approximately 45m OD.

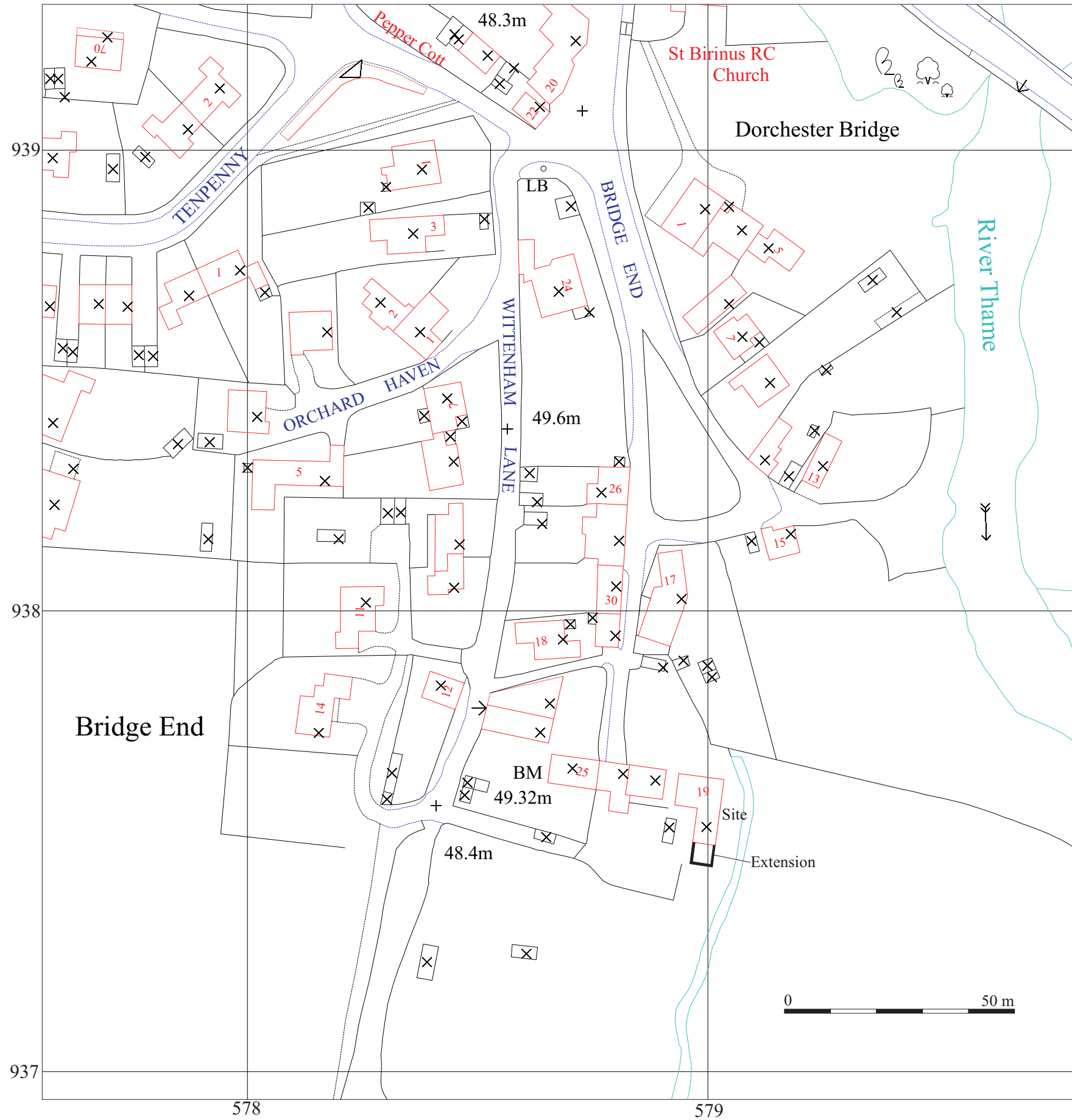
1.2 Planning Background

South Oxfordshire District Council has granted planning permission for a single storey rear extension to replace an existing conservatory to the property of Green Acre, 19 Bridge End, Dorchester-on-Thames. Due to the potential of the site to contain archaeological remains a condition was attached to the planning permission requiring the implementation of a watching brief during groundworks. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) prepared a Brief for the work. A Written Scheme of Investigation was submitted by John Moore Heritage Services detailing how the requirements of the Brief would be met.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Green Acre lies in an area of known archaeological potential between the southern defences of the Roman town and the northern hinterland of the Iron Age site of Dyke Hills. Dorchester-on-Thames is situated over the site of a small Roman town, which consisted of roughly rectangular defences enclosing a civil settlement of about 13.5 ha. 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 4th century and until the end of the 5th century (Henig & Booth 2000, 47). A number of sites and findspots have been recorded to the north of the proposal area and south of the Roman defences.

Roman pottery and other finds have been found at SU 5788 9390 (PRN 16376) 140m to the north of the proposal area and evidence of a Roman habitation site has been recorded at SU 5779 9389 (PRN 2954) 170m to the northwest of the site. A number of burials have been recorded to the north of the proposal site centred at SU 5783 9385 (PRN 5530) 110m northwest of the site. Two inhumations were discovered in 1965 during building works in the garden of what is now 1 Orchard Lane. They were buried in an east-west orientation with one apparently interred within a wooden coffin. There were also indications of further grave cuts in the area suggesting that they were part of a cemetery as opposed to being isolated burials. The graves seemed to have been cut through gravel containing pottery of 1st century, possibly indicative of settlement of that period. Recently a burial has been found at Haven Close, west of



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Figure 1. Site location

Orchard Haven, along with a 2nd century north/south orientated ditch (pers. com. R Bashford). These may be part of a Roman cemetery located immediately outside the town's southern defences.

A human burial, probably of late Roman date, was recorded on the east side of Wittenham Lane only 65m northnorthwest of the proposal site (PRN 13029) This burial had also cut through an earlier Roman ditch or pit, indicating activity during this period. Further intercutting burials along with several ditches and pits have been found during development at Rose Cottage, 10 Wittenham Lane (SU 5784 9380; PRN 26104) 75m northwest of the proposal site.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

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

- To identify and record any archaeological remains exposed during the construction works

In particular:

- to record any remains associated the Roman activity known in the area
- to record any burials that might be present

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with OCAS. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record throughout, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994) and the procedures laid down in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991).

3.2 Methodology

The excavation of the footings was monitored and the trench-sections cleaned and examined.

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.

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

4 RESULTS

All archaeological features were assigned individual context numbers. This number covered both the feature cut and fill, unless the feature was sample excavated by hand. Context numbers in () indicate deposits of material. A general description of the deposits is given.

The footings for the new conservatory were laid around the existing base of the old building (Fig. 1). They were excavated as trenches measuring 0.7m wide and up to 1.1m deep in places; as they were hand excavated, the depths were not consistent. The natural gravels were not encountered in this area. The earliest layer excavated (04) was a friable, dark brown silty loam clay, possibly an older subsoil or cultivation soil. Overlaying this were two possible levelling or build up layers; (03) was a dark brown/black layer, with brick and tile fragments and sooty areas, while (02) was a mid-brown silty clay layer. Above this lay the topsoil (01), dark brown silty clay. No dateable finds were recovered and the brick and tile fragments were not retained.

5 DISCUSSION

The ground level of the house and garden of Green Acre was approximately a metre higher than the fields directly to the east. The layers seen during this excavation are probably built up layers to raise the garden and house above the flood plain. No remains of archaeological significance were observed, although the build-up of the area could mean that archaeology is sealed underneath these layers.

6 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper Record

The project brief	The project report
Written Scheme of Investigation	The primary site records

The accession number for the archive is OXCMS : 2007 : 141

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Heritage 1991 Management of Archaeological Projects

Henig, M, & Booth, P, 2000 *Roman Oxfordshire* Sutton Publishing Stroud

Institute of Field Archaeologists. 1994. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*.