



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT
PENN COTTAGE, 20 CHURCH STREET, BRILL,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NGR SP 6555 1376

On behalf of

J N & E Vaile

JULY 2009

REPORT FOR	J N & E Vaile Penn Cottage 20 Church Street Brill Buckinghamshire HP18 9RT
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Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation of footings for a replacement extension to the rear of the property. Three pits dating from the 17th and 18th centuries, in addition to an undated pit, were observed. Good assemblages of post-medieval Brill production wares, as well as material of non-local production, were recovered from the three 17th and 18th century features, comprising chamber pots, pancheons, bowls, a tankard and part of a tea-pot indicating a well-to-do household.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site was located in the village of Brill on the south side of Church Street opposite the Red Lion public house at NGR SP 6555 1376. The site was at c. 184m OD. Geologically the site was situated on Whitchurch Sandstone Formation close to the junction with Purbeck Formation.

1.2 Planning Background

Aylesbury Vale District Council granted planning permission (08/02674/APP) for the demolition of existing single story rear structures and the erection of a single storey rear extension. Due to the potential for archaeological remains to be present on the site a condition was attached to the permission requiring the carrying out of an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the new construction. Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) issued a generic brief for a watching brief for this development site. A Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by John Moore Heritage Services and agreed with BCAS outlining the method by which the archaeological watching brief was to be carried out in order to preserve by record any archaeological remains of significance.

1.3 Archaeological Background

Brill is of considerable archaeological interest with evidence for Iron Age occupation adjacent to the church associated with an earthwork (Historic Environment Record Number 0106; NGR SP 6560 1389), which may be the remains of a hillfort rampart (Farley 1989), but are likely to be later (JMHS 2005). In the late Saxon period, Brill was a royal manor and the centre of an estate, which may have had its origins in a pre-Saxon 'multiple estate' (Baines 1995). Brill was the most important settlement within the medieval forest of Bernwood, which was legally established following the Norman Conquest based upon the pre-existing woodland and a hunting lodge built by Edward the Confessor. Brill was the administrative centre for the forest and hundred with a royal house, fishponds, mills, church, prison-house, market and fair, claypits and kilns. In the 13th and early 14th centuries Brill was described as a borough but thereafter it went into decline and lost its status as a town. Brill was the centre of an important regional pottery and tile industry, which is believed to have originated in the 12th century and continued to be active into the post-medieval period when it also produced bricks (Harvey 1997). During the Civil War Brill was briefly garrisoned by Parliament during the winter of 1644.

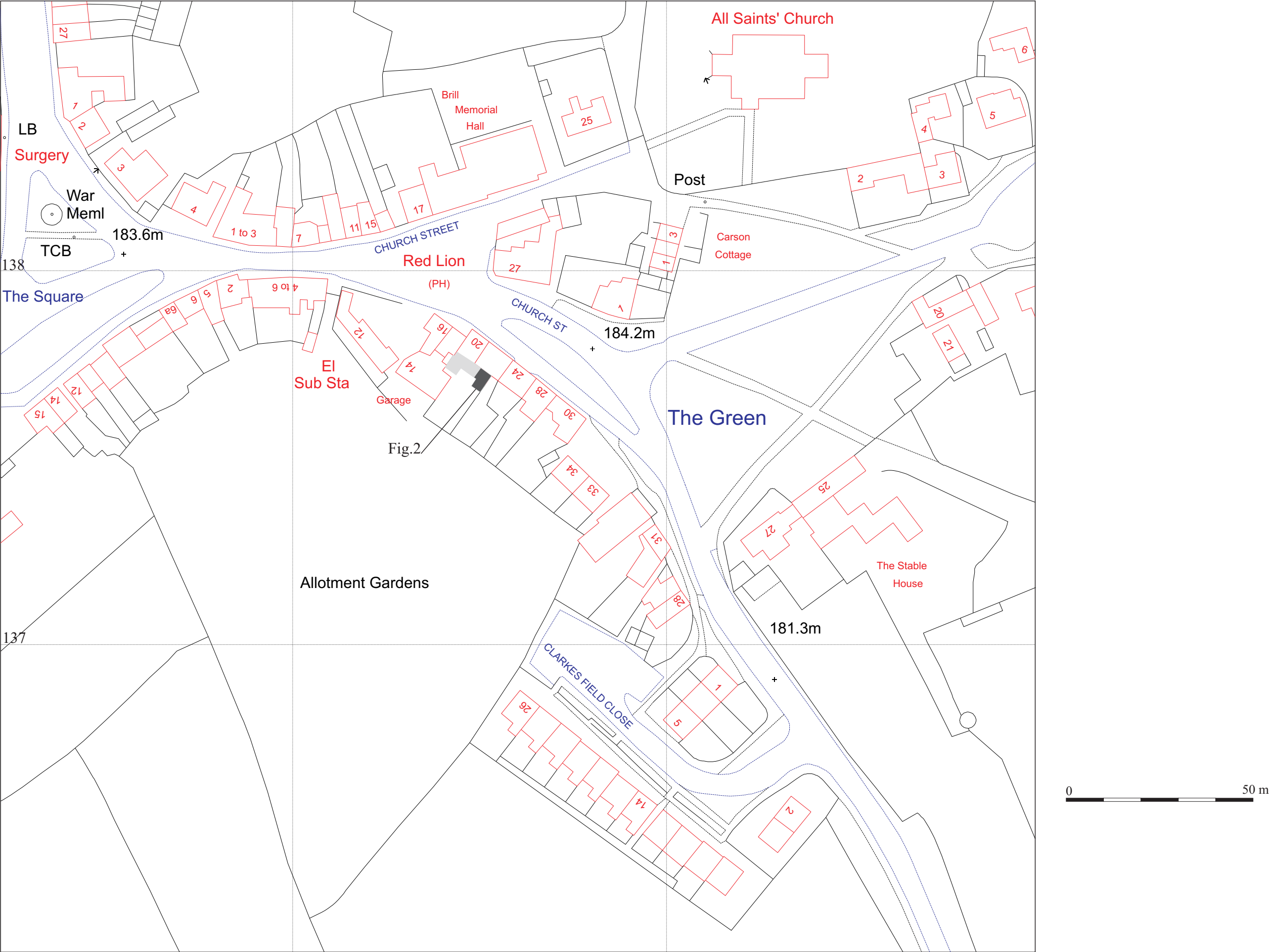


Figure 1. Site Location

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Little early prehistoric remains have been found in Brill with a possible Mesolithic blade found approximately 170m to the east (HER 2053; SP 6571 1379). Similarly only limited Roman finds are known from Brill, which include a coin 300m northwest (HER 5216; SP 6526 1393) of the proposal site and a 1st century coin from the parish (HER 0582).

A timber royal hunting lodge (HER 2310) was constructed in the 11th century somewhere within Brill. The building prospered and grew with royal favour and the later parish church (HER 2192; SP 6562 1385) may have functioned as a royal chapel to the palace. Royal presence had economic implications as under its patronage, the pottery industry may have been established by the end of the 12th century (Mellor 1994, 111). Evidence for the industry is found throughout Brill and medieval pottery is often found in conjunction with later brick, tile and pottery kilns (e.g. HER 5712; SP 6560 1408), indicating longevity and continuity of use.

A mound considered a medieval castle motte lies approximately 150m NNE (HER 0528; SP 6550 1390). This mound is recorded on the Bateson map of 1590.

Extensive remains of the medieval and post-medieval pottery, tile and brick industry are known in the village (Farley 1979). These are mainly in the central, west and north part of the village. Medieval pottery kilns include (HER 5058, SP 6593 1421; HER 4394, SP 6566 1427; HER 0576, SP 6564 1428; possible HER 5681, SP 6558 1425; HER 5293, SP 6552 1413; and HER 2195, SP 6550 1390).

Post-medieval brick and tile works are known in the north of the village (HER 4653, SP 6562 1486 and HER 4192, SP 6555 4190). Pottery kilns of the post-medieval period occur near the centre of the village (HER 5293, SP 6552 1413; HER 2129, SP 5638 1407; HER 2153, SP 6548 1405).

An evaluation at the east end of Windmill Street, to the rear of the Sun Inn, produced traces of post-medieval pottery production, including dumps of clay, pottery wasters and kiln furniture (Murray 2001).

Closer to the site there are only two known possible pottery kiln sites in the south of the village. One is in Almshouse Allotments (HER 2478, SP 6548 1370), to the south of the site, where 14th and 15th century pottery including three wasters and two sherds with glaze over the fractures are indicative of a kiln site. The pottery is mostly jugs with some jar fragments. There were also possible 13th century jugs. The other site is approximately 300m to the east where pottery of 16th -17th century date was found in a field survey suggesting the possibility of a kiln site (HER 0249, SP 6583 1380). Excavations at 16-18 Church Street failed to yield any indication of kiln activity (Oxford Archaeology 2008, 6), although one of the three quarry pits dated from the 19th century, was with residual 15th century pottery.

The Solent Thames Historic Environment Resource Assessment for post-medieval Buckinghamshire has noted the heavy concentration of excavated pottery kilns at Brill. There is considerable research potential of this isolated industrial community to serve as a model for other early industrial settlements and settlement patterns in the region (Taylor-Moore and Dyer 2007; Green, Giggins and Welch 2007). Detailed investigation of the village might fill in the picture of the distribution of kilns through

time and space. It would be interesting to know, for example, whether little Brill had an 'industrial quarter' as might be superficially suggested by the concentration of known sites in the northern half of the settlement. This pattern might usefully be related to known settlement patterns and evidence of the standards of living across the village through the study of pottery or other material (Green, Giggins and Welch 2007).

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 revealed by the groundworks namely by any ground reduction and excavation for the new foundations and any new services.
- In particular to record any evidence of medieval or post-medieval occupation or evidence for the medieval and post-medieval pottery, brick and tile industry.
- To determine the relationship between the building and its immediate environs.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) issued a generic brief for the work, which John Moore Heritage Services carried out to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with BCAS, on behalf of the local planning authority.

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

3.2 Methodology

The former extension had been removed prior to the watching brief starting. The removal of the 19th century make-up and the excavation of the footing-trenches were monitored (Fig. 1). These works were carried out with a 1.5 ton mini-excavator and by hand by the building contractor. A depth of approximately 0.4m of 19th century material overlay the exposed remains, which were concentrated on the east side of the area. These were planned and where appropriate a section-drawing was made.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Field Results

The site was excavated to a yellow-brown sandy clay (110), which was the top of the surface geology. Cut into this deposit were four pits in the northeast corner of the site

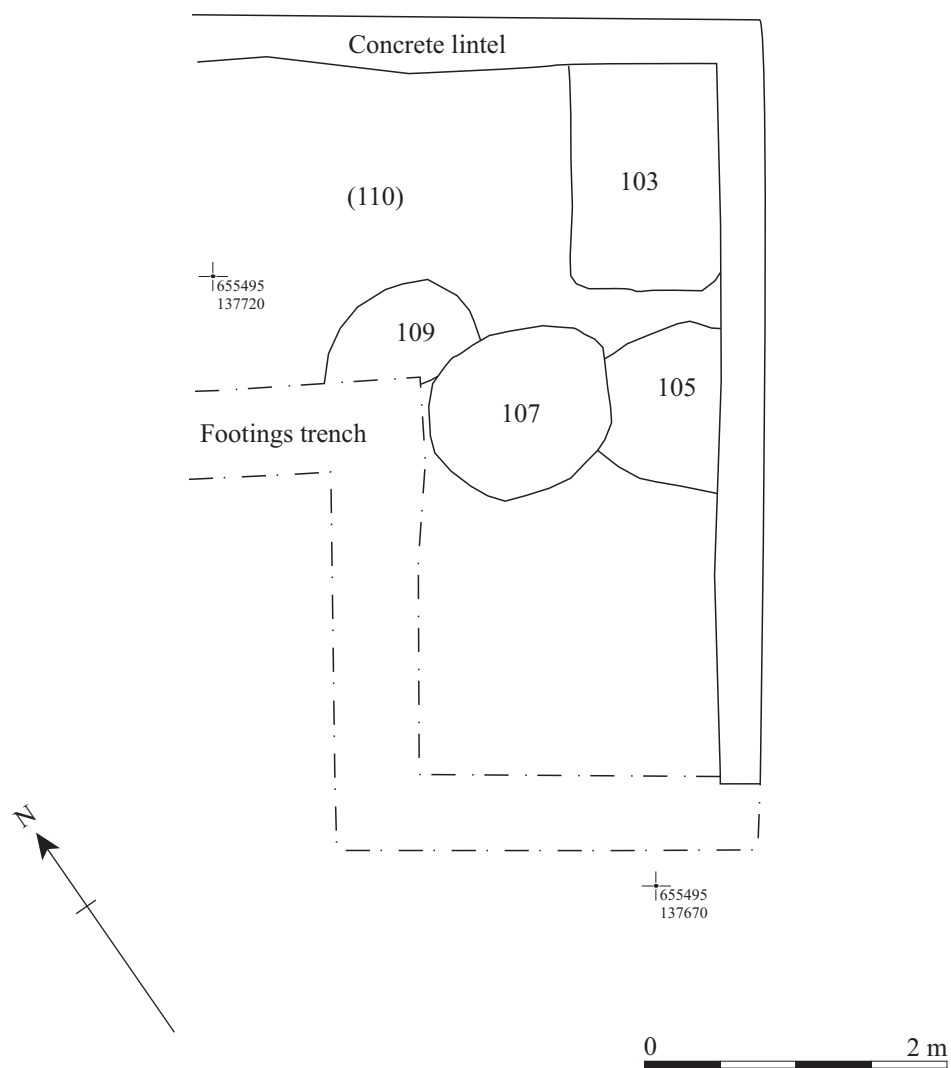


Figure 2. Plan of exposed archaeological remains

(Fig. 2). Three of the pits yielded dating evidence. None of the pits were excavated; the pottery was retrieved from the uppermost fills of the pits. All the fills of the pits were red-brown loamy clay sand, with charcoal and small stone evenly distributed throughout. The earliest dated feature, pit 105, was rounded, although as it extended under the east extent of the site its shape was not ascertained. This pit dated from the 17th century. To the west of it was an undated pit, 109. Both of these two pits were cut by a round pit 107, which measured 1.2m in diameter. The pottery yielded dated to the late 17th century.

To the northeast of the group of three pits was a fourth pit 103. This rectangular pit extended beneath the east wall of the site and under the wall of the present building, Penn Cottage, toward 22 Church Street. Pottery recovered from this feature dated from the 18th century.

Sealing all four pits was a layer of firm brown-red sandy clay (101), which yielded pottery from the 19th century. This deposit was c. 0.4m thick and was observed across the area of the site. On the northwest side of the site it was more disturbed where there were a number of services. No archaeology was present on this northwest side.

To the south of the extension some topsoil (100) in the garden was disturbed. It measured at least 0.4m thick. This deposit also yielded a 19th century date; bottle glass – both kicks and body sherds – was observed but not retained from this layer.

No structural remains of any preceding buildings were observed during the groundworks. Any which might be present must be assumed to exist beneath the extant building.

4.2 Reliability of Results

The watching brief was carried out in generally clement conditions with excellent co-operation from the contractors carrying out the groundworks and the results are felt to be representative of the extant archaeology.

5 FINDS

5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 84 sherds with a total weight of 7,680g. It was almost entirely post-medieval, and dated to the 17th century or later, apart from two sherds of residual late medieval pottery of Brill type.

The assemblage was recorded using the coding system of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit type-series (e.g. Mynard and Zeepvat 1992; Zeepvat et al. 1994), as follows:

MS9: *Brill/Boarstall Ware*. 1200-1600. 2 sherds, 128g.

PM5: *Trailed slip-ware*. 17th century. 4 sherds, 958g

PM8: *Red Earthenware*. 16th – 19th century. 39 sherds, 3672g.

PM16: *Black-glazed coarsewares*. 17th century. 5 sherds, 345 g.

PM18: *Green-glazed white ware*. 17th century. 1 sherd, 33g.

PM21: *English tin-glazed earthenware*. 17th – 18th century. 1 sherd, 59g.

PM22: *Staffordshire White Salt-Glazed Stoneware*. 1730 – 1800. 4 sherds, 75g.

PM25: *White Earthenware*. Late 18th – 20th century. 11 sherds, 181g.

PM28: *English Stoneware*. Late 17th C+. 2 sherds, 299g.

PM37: *Marbled Slipware*. 17th – 18th century. 14 sherds, 1874g

PM56: *Manganese Glazed Ware*. Late 17th – 18th century. 1 sherd, 56g.

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 fabric types are all known in the region. The sherd of fabric PM18, classified as “Green-glazed Whiteware” in the MKDC type-series, is a sherd of Hampshire-Surrey Border Ware (Pearce 1988).

The assemblage is generally very well preserved, with many of the vessels well-represented. It consists of pots of local manufacture along with regional imports, mainly from Staffordshire. The range of ware and vessel types is typical of a fairly well-to-do household of the 17th – 18th century, and comprises a mixture of utilitarian pottery and fine tablewares.

The utilitarian pottery includes large pancheons in Red Earthenware, and Brill/Boarstall dishes and bowls with slip decoration, or plain white under-glaze slip. There were also two chamber-pots, both with a brown-streaked clear glaze which appear yellow over a plain white slip. The fine wares included a near-complete Nottingham/Derby stoneware tankard, fragments of a Staffordshire white stoneware tea-pot, and a fragment of a tin-glaze earthenware bowl with painted polychrome decoration. It is an assemblage which is typical of the period in the region, and compares well with the contemporary assemblages from Great Linford (op. cit.)

Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number of sherds per context by fabric type.

	MS9	PM8	PM18	PM16	PM21	PM5	PM37	PM28	PM56	PM22	PM25	
Cntxt	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Date
100											3	19thC
101	1	15			1		4	27		4	8	19thC
102	1	2				1	9	272				M18thC
104		3				1						17thC
106		19	1	5		2	1		1			L17thC
Total	2	39	1	5	1	4	14	299	1	4	11	

Table 2: Pottery occurrence by weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type.

	MS9	PM8	PM18	PM16	PM21	PM5	PM37	PM28	PM56	PM22	PM25	
Cntxt	Wt	Wt	Wt	Wt	Wt	Wt	Wt	Wt	Wt	Wt	Wt	Date
100											17	19thC
101	101	893			59		124	27		75	164	19thC
102	27	98				67	1039	272				M18thC
104		528				44						17thC
106		2153	33	345		847	711		81			L17thC
Total	128	3672	33	345	59	958	1874	299	81	75	181	

5.2 Environmental Remains

No features were considered to warrant environmental sampling.

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 photographic and drawn records	

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services. The archive will be transferred to:

Buckinghamshire County Museum, Technical Centre, Tring Road, Halton, Aylesbury HP22 5PJ under accession number 2009.73

7 DISCUSSION

The watching brief at Penn Cottage, 20 Church Street, Brill revealed three pits dating from the 17th through to 18th centuries. A fourth pit was undated and yielded no finds. The pottery assemblage was typical and consisted of a number of items which identify the household as being well-to-do.

All the items recovered came from the uppermost part of the fills, and no bone or other finds were present.

The buildings, which front onto Church Street here, are 19th century in date and the pits cannot be associated with them. Some of the pottery is local production. Kilns dating from the 17th and 18th centuries have been excavated between 200m and 400m north of the site. Fieldwalking 300m east of the site has also indicated a possible 16th-17th century kiln-site, though no invasive work has been carried out. Although the allotment to the south has been identified as a probable kiln-site, it dates from the 13th-14th centuries. The only medieval Brill/Boarstall ware found in the assemblages was residual, found in the 19th century overburden (101) and in the fill of the 18th-century pit. In the adjacent property to the west, 16-18 Church Street, an evaluation by Oxford Archaeology yielded a quarry pit dating from the 19th century, with residual 15th-century pottery (Oxford Archaeology 2008, 6). It was concluded that while the site may well have provided raw material for potting, no kiln activity had occurred in the immediate vicinity. A ditch formed a boundary between the extraction works and the village. It is not possible to say whether 20 Church Street was within this enclosure.

Although the assemblage cannot cast any light on whether Little Brill, to the north of the site, was an 'industrial quarter' as suggested by Taylor & Dyer (2007), it is indeed possible that the presence of local pottery may well indicate a local potter or kiln-owner's dwelling (Paul Blinkhorn pers. comm.). Map regression does not permit any earlier identification than the 19th century for the property. The Ashendon hundred map of 1847 shows a modest quantity of housing fronting Church Street, but the mapping is schematic. Clearly, the 1899 OS map shows a number of properties in this terrace of differing size and shape to the rear, whereas the fronts giving onto Church

Street are quite uniform. This is true today also, with the exception of the present Penn Cottage, which appears to be later in style than the rest of the houses to the east, which date from the late 17th or early 18th centuries. If this is the site of a dwelling of a kiln-owner, any structure lies underneath the present terrace fronting Church Street.

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