



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**10, THE CLOSE, STADHAMPTON**

**OXFORDSHIRE**

**SU 6013 9854**

*On behalf of*

*Vicky Gamble*

**SEPTEMBER 2009**

<b>REPORT FOR</b>	Vicky Gamble 10, The Close Stadhampton Oxford OX3 8EZ
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## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for the erection of an extension to the property at 10 The Close, Stadhampton. A large pit yielding a single rim-sherd of 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century Brill/Boarstall ware along with some bone and an undated ditch were recorded. No evidence was observed which might relate to the prehistoric monument complex.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The site was located on the western outskirts of Stadhampton south of School Lane (NGR SU 6013 9854). The site lies at about 53m OD and the underlying geology is 1<sup>st</sup> (Floodplain) Terrace Deposits of the river Thame. The existing land use is a house and garden.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

South Oxfordshire District Council granted planning permission for the construction of a new sitting room extension, new single storey porch and a first floor extension above existing utility room (08/W0073). Due to the archaeological potential of the site a condition was attached requiring an archaeological watching brief to be maintained during the period of groundworks. This is in line with PPG 16 and Local Plan Policies. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services prepared a *Brief* for such archaeological work.

### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

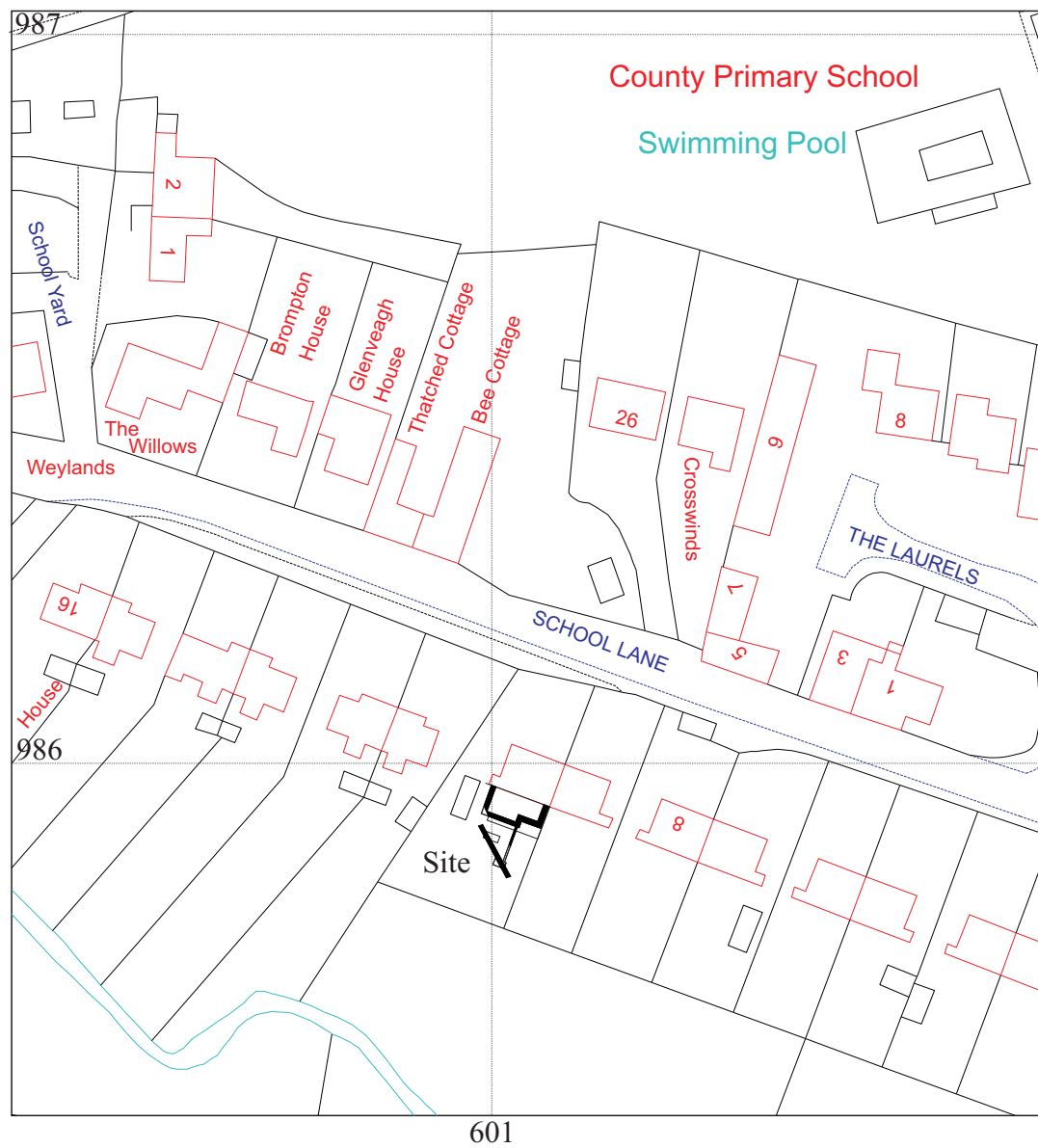
The western end of Stadhampton has produced evidence of an extensive Neolithic and Bronze Age ritual and funerary complex covering several hectares (PRN 15322). This includes an early Neolithic Causewayed Enclosure (PRN 15322.01), a Neolithic long barrow (PRN 15322.05), a cursus (PRN15322.02), an oval barrow (PRN 15322.04) and a hengi-form monument (PRN 15322.03). These all lie between west and northwest of the site.

In addition, in the 1980s, the fragmentary skeletal remains of two individuals were found in the footings of Orchard House (PRN 13278), while a further one was found during a watching brief in 2006 at the same site. Although they could not be dated, and were simply referred to as being 'pre-medieval', it is possible that the burials were associated with the prehistoric complex.

## **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.



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0 50 m

Figure 1. Site Location

A particular objective was

- to record any evidence relating to the prehistoric complex

### **3 STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the client and Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services, on behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council. 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 and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (2008).

#### **3.2 Methodology**

Trenching for footings and for two soakaways were observed. The north soakaway was the first to be excavated, but was too close to the house and consequently was not fully excavated.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate.

### **4 RESULTS**

#### **4.1 Results (Figure 2)**

The natural undisturbed ground was bright yellow gravel (3) c. 1m below modern ground level. This was observed at the south of the watching brief area, in the soakaways and the trench connecting the soakaways to the footings trench.

Overlying the gravel in the south soakaway was a deposit of subsoil (10), which consisted of red-brown sandy silt with c. 15% gravel through it. It was 0.7m thick. The subsoil was cut by a ditch, cut 8, in the south soakaway. The ditch 8 appeared to extend to the northwest as cut 5. This ditch was observed to contain one fill (9), a dark brown clay silt loam, which was more than 0.5m thick. Only the eastern edge of cut 8 was observed. To the northwest in the second soakaway, cut 5 was seen to be over 1m wide and 0.7m deep, where it was filled with two fills (6) and (7). The deposit (6) was grey brown clay silt loam, with some yellow gravel mottling, measuring 0.4m thick. The deposit (7), which overlay (6), was a similar if slightly paler deposit and 0.3m thick. The subsoil was not present here. No finds were recovered in any deposits from either soakaway.

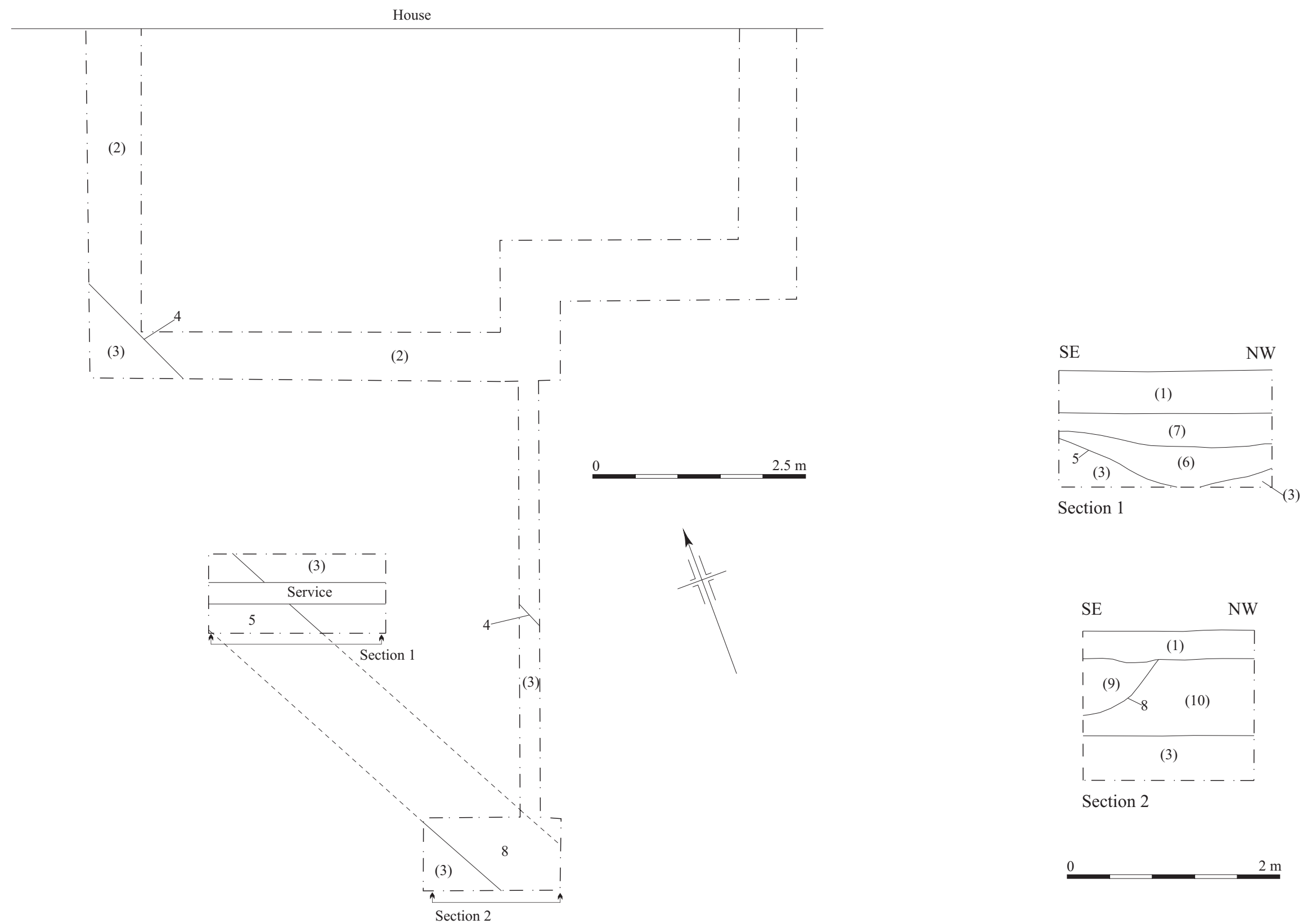


Figure 2. Plan and sections

To the north of the south soakaway a trench extended toward the house extension. A cut for a large pit 4 was seen in the trench approximately 7m from the former rear of the house and across the east/west extent of the footings trench. The pit was filled with soft yellow gravel mixed with brown-black clay silt loam (2). It was more than 0.7m thick. A single rim-sherd of Brill/Boarstall ware dating from after the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries was recovered from the fill. Butchered animal bone was also seen, but not retained.

All features were sealed by topsoil (1), which varied between 0.4m and 0.3m thick across the site.

## **4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results**

The watching brief was conducted under good conditions.

## **5 FINDS**

### **5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn**

A single sherd of medieval pottery occurred in context [02]. It weighed 54g, and is from the rim of a Brill/Boarstall ware jug, Oxfordshire fabric OXAM (Mellor 1994). It is of 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century date, and is a typical product of the tradition. Such pottery is very common on sites of the period in Oxfordshire. The sherd is largely unabraded and appears reliably stratified.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

The watching brief revealed an undated ditch running northwest/southeast. This ditch does not appear on any of the Ordnance Survey maps. Due to its relatively loamy fill it does not appear to be part of the prehistoric monumental landscape, which is located 250m to the west (Barclay *et al.* 2003). It may well represent a medieval or post-medieval field boundary in the floodplain. The large pit from which the rim-sherd was retrieved may well be either a quarry pit for gravel, or indeed be associated with the construction of 10, The Close. Given the limited view of the pit it is not possible to be certain which of the possibilities is more likely.

## **7 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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