

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

FERRY NAB,

FERRY LANE, MEDMENHAM

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

NGR SU 8061 8382

On behalf of

Superior Construction (UK) Ltd.

MARCH 2010

REPORT FOR Superior Construction (UK) Ltd.
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Summary

A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation of a drainage trench. The ground had been previously disturbed by drainage with no archaeology visible at a depth of 0.6m below modern ground level.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site was located at the south end of Ferry Lane and to the east of it close to the river Thames at NGR SU 8061 8382 (Figure 1). The underlying solid geology is First (Floodplain) Terrace Deposits. The site is currently in residential use. The development area lies between the house and the garage block.

1.2 Planning Background

Wycombe District Council granted planning permission for a two storey link extension incorporating new front porch (7/06396/FUL). Due to the site's potential to contain archaeological remains a condition was attached to the permission for a programme of archaeological work to be carried out during groundworks. This was in line with Planning Policy Guidance 16 (Archaeology and Planning) (DoE 1990). Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) issued a *Brief for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. 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

The site lies within the precinct of Medmenham Abbey (Historic Environment Record CAS1751). The Abbey was a Cistercian House founded in the 13th century although there is evidence indicating earlier Christian activity on the site in the form of some burials that appeared to pre-date the Abbey. The current Medmenham Abbey is a Grade II* listed building dating from 1595 with 18th and 19th century additions and is built on the site of the medieval Cistercian Abbey. The current building was restored in 1898.

The medieval Abbey layout is poorly understood, with traces of wall footings and burials recorded south of the surviving Tudor range and burials to the east. The site was observed during building work in 1921 with a number of observations made (Plaisted 1925). A series of watching briefs have been undertaken within the precinct; on a pipe trench west of the garages (Farley 1991), on extensions to Abbey Cottages (Farley 1992), on building works to the Abbey Barn (Farley 1993), during trenching work for a heating system (Carstairs & Parkhouse 1993), and new footings within the southern wing of the complex (Farley 2001). The results of the watching briefs are brought together in a comprehensive study of the Abbey by Mike Farley (2001). The watching briefs have recorded wall footings, human burials, and pottery including a small amount earlier than the 13th century with two probable mid-Saxon sherds.

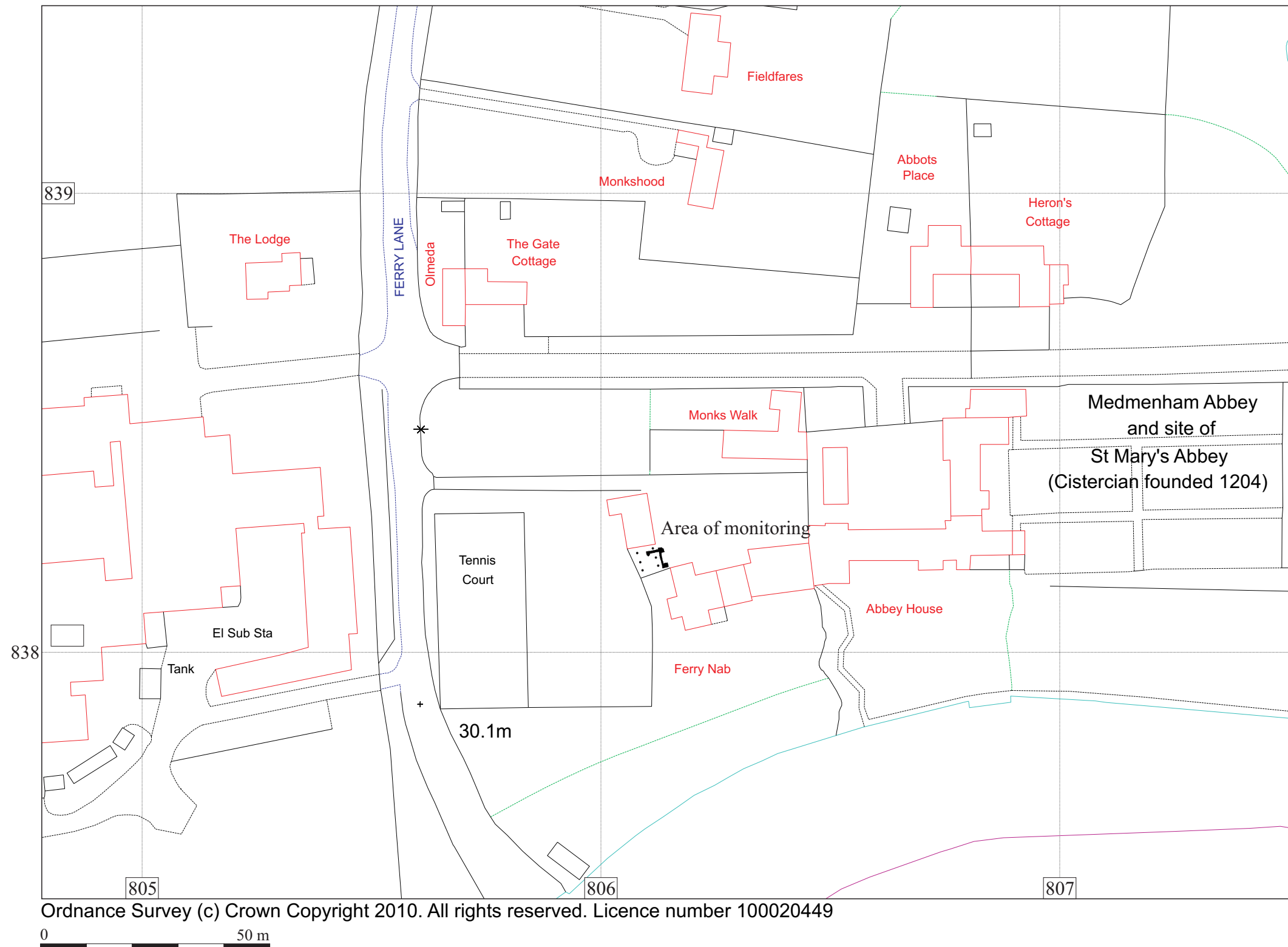


Figure 1. Site location

A watching brief by TVAS in 2004 at Ferry Nab conducted during work for two new extensions found made ground up to a depth of least 2m. This comprised earth with much chalk, sometimes in large fragments, which probably represents material imported onto the site against flooding, or perhaps, the remains of the demolition of the Medmenham Hotel that formerly occupied the site. The Medmenham Hotel was in existence from at least 1895 with Ferry Nab appearing to have achieved its present layout before 1925 and seems to reflect rebuilding on the site of the demolished hotel (Jenkins & Taylor 2004). The watching brief found a short length of chalk-built wall on the north side of the house. To the west lay a chalk deposit which may have been an associated floor (ibid).

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 that will be impacted on by the development with particular regard to the possibility of finds relating to the medieval abbey.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service (BCAS) issued a 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

An archaeologist was present during excavation for the diversion of the drainage. The link extension was a piled foundation with an associated ringbeam and slab built above present ground level.

The top 1m of the three pile positions on the west side were hand dug due to tree roots. Inspection of the pile positions carried out after piling revealed only made ground. The southern pile position had been disturbed by service trenches. No finds earlier than the late 19th/early 20th century were found within the hand excavated soil. A manhole was moved during excavation of the trench for the new drainage, monitoring revealed that the previous drainage trenches and access chambers had disturbed ground to a depth of not less than 0.6m.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Field Results

The drainage trench did not achieve the natural geological deposit of 1st Terrace Gravels. It was excavated into a grey/grey-brown clay silt (2), with brick, chalk, sand

and topsoil pockets, and measured at least 0.6m thick. No finds were recovered, although brick was examined on site, and was machine-made. It was not retained. This deposit might represent either demolition or made ground, associated with the previous hotel, or with the current house. It was sealed by shingle (1), which covered the area to the front of the house.

4.2 Reliability of Results

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

5 FINDS

5.1 Finds

No finds were retained during the watching brief. Late 19th/early 20th century pottery was seen but not retained from the hand excavation of uppermost deposits of three pile positions . Machine-made brick, indicating a similar date-range was observed but not retained during the monitoring of the drainage trench.

5.2 Environmental Remains

5.3

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 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 when an accession number has been assigned by Buckinghamshire County Museum Service.

7 DISCUSSION

The watching brief at Ferry Nab revealed modern made ground or demolition. Given the limited view of the activity – 0.6m maximum depth and no natural geology attained – it is not possible to say whether archaeological remains subsist below the level of the drainage which had been previously laid.

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