

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**15 THE GREEN, BRILL,**

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

**SP 65725 13804**

*On behalf of*

*Dr McLean & Ms Lamb*

**JUNE 2010**

**REPORT FOR** Dr McLean and Ms Lamb  
97 Albert Street  
Camden Town  
London  
NW1 7LX

**PREPARED BY** Eoin Fitzsimons

**ILLUSTRATION BY** Eoin Fitzsimons

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**ENQUIRES TO** John Moore Heritage Services  
Hill View  
Woodperry Road  
Beckley  
Oxfordshire OX3 9UZ  
Tel/Fax 01865 358300  
Email: [info@jmheritageservices.co.uk](mailto:info@jmheritageservices.co.uk)

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## **Summary**

*A watching brief was conducted by John Moore Heritage Services during the excavation of footings for an extension to the side of the property. One undated pit and an undated ditch were observed along with the footings of an early-modern privy.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

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

The site was located at 15 The Green on the south side of The Green (NGR SP 65725 13804). Geologically the site is situated on Whitchurch Sand Formation.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Aylesbury Vale District Council has granted planning permission for a single storey 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 brief for a watching brief for this development site. This was in line with PPS 5 and Local Plan policies.

### **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 CAS0106; 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.

Little early prehistoric remains have been found in Brill with five Mesolithic blades found at the adjacent property to the west (CAS2053; SP 6571 1379). Similarly limited Roman finds are known from Brill and include a coin 300m northwest (CAS 5216; SP 6526 1393) of the proposal site and a 1st century coin from the parish (CAS0582).

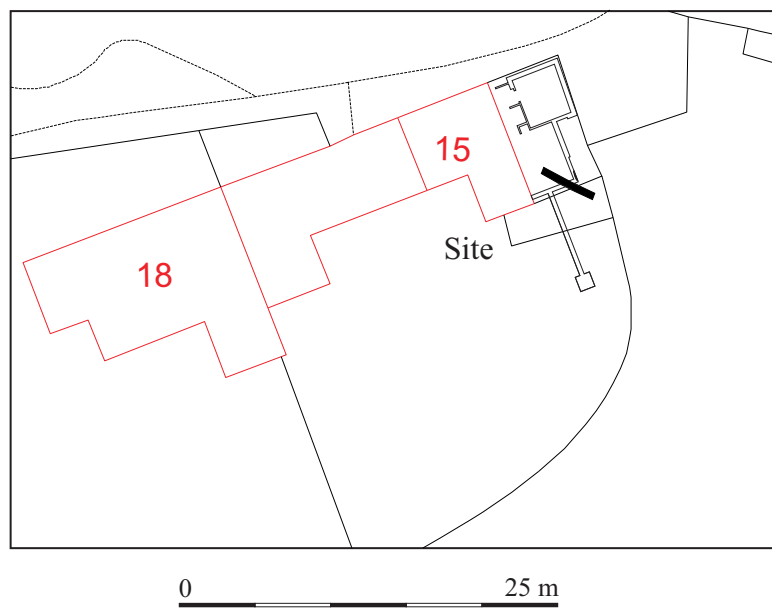
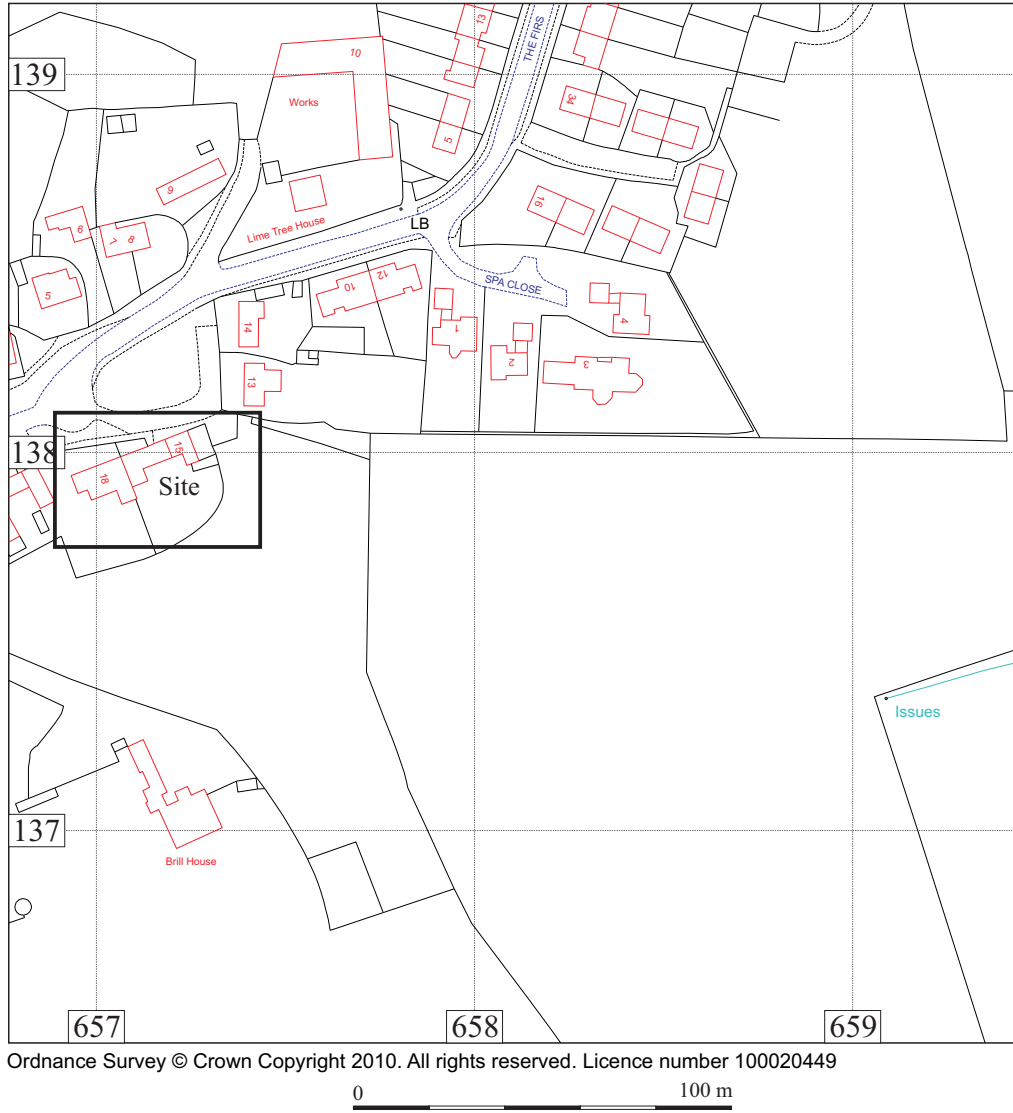


Figure 1. Site location

A timber royal hunting lodge (CAS2310) was constructed in the 11th century somewhere within Brill. The building prospered and grew with royal favour and the later parish church (CAS2192; 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. CAS5712; SP 6560 1408), indicating longevity and continuity of use.

A mound considered a medieval castle motte lies approximately 240m to the NNW (CAS0528; 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 (CAS5058, SP 6593 1421; CAS4394, SP 6566 1427; CAS0576, SP 6564 1428; possible CAS5681, SP6558 1425; CAS5293, SP 6552 1413; and CAS195, SP 6550 1390).

Post-medieval brick and tile works are known in the north of the village (CAS4653, SP 6562 1486 and CAS4192, SP 6555 4190). Pottery kilns of the post-medieval period occur near the centre of the village (CAS5293, SP 6552 1413; CAS2129, SP 5638 1407; CAS2153, 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 the allotments approximately 200m west of the site (CAS 2478, SP 6548 1370) where 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> century jugs. The other site is 120m to the east where pottery of 16<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> century date was found in a field survey suggesting the possibility of a kiln site (CAS2499, SP 6583 1380).

A recent watching brief at Penn Cottage, 20 Church Street, 180m west of the site found three pits dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The pottery recovered suggested the possibility of a local potter or kiln-owner's dwelling on the site.

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 by any ground reduction and excavation for the new foundations and any new services, paying particular regard to the potential for
- Evidence relating to the projected line of the scheduled earthwork
- Evidence relating to the apparently high-status occupation in the central core around the church
- Dating evidence relating to the origins of occupation fronting on to The Green
- Evidence for the medieval and post-medieval pottery, brick and tile industry.
- Mesolithic artefacts known in the immediate area.

## **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.

### **3.2 Methodology**

An archaeologist was present on site during the course of ground works associated with the development. This included the excavation of a soak away and the excavation of footings. 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 for Archaeologists (1994).

## **4 RESULTS (Figure 2)**

### **4.1 Field Results**

Cutting into a mid yellow-orange sandy clay natural (02) was a ditch 04 and a pit 06 and the footings for an outdoor privy. Ditch 04 was 0.60m wide, and was 0.30m wide as seen. It had concave edges, which sloped at a 15-degree angle onto a flat base. It was aligned southwest- northeast. It was filled with a moderately compact dark grey brown silty clay (03), which contained around 15% small gravel no larger than 0.04m. There appeared to be a thin clay layer pushed into the base of the ditch, to form a lining.

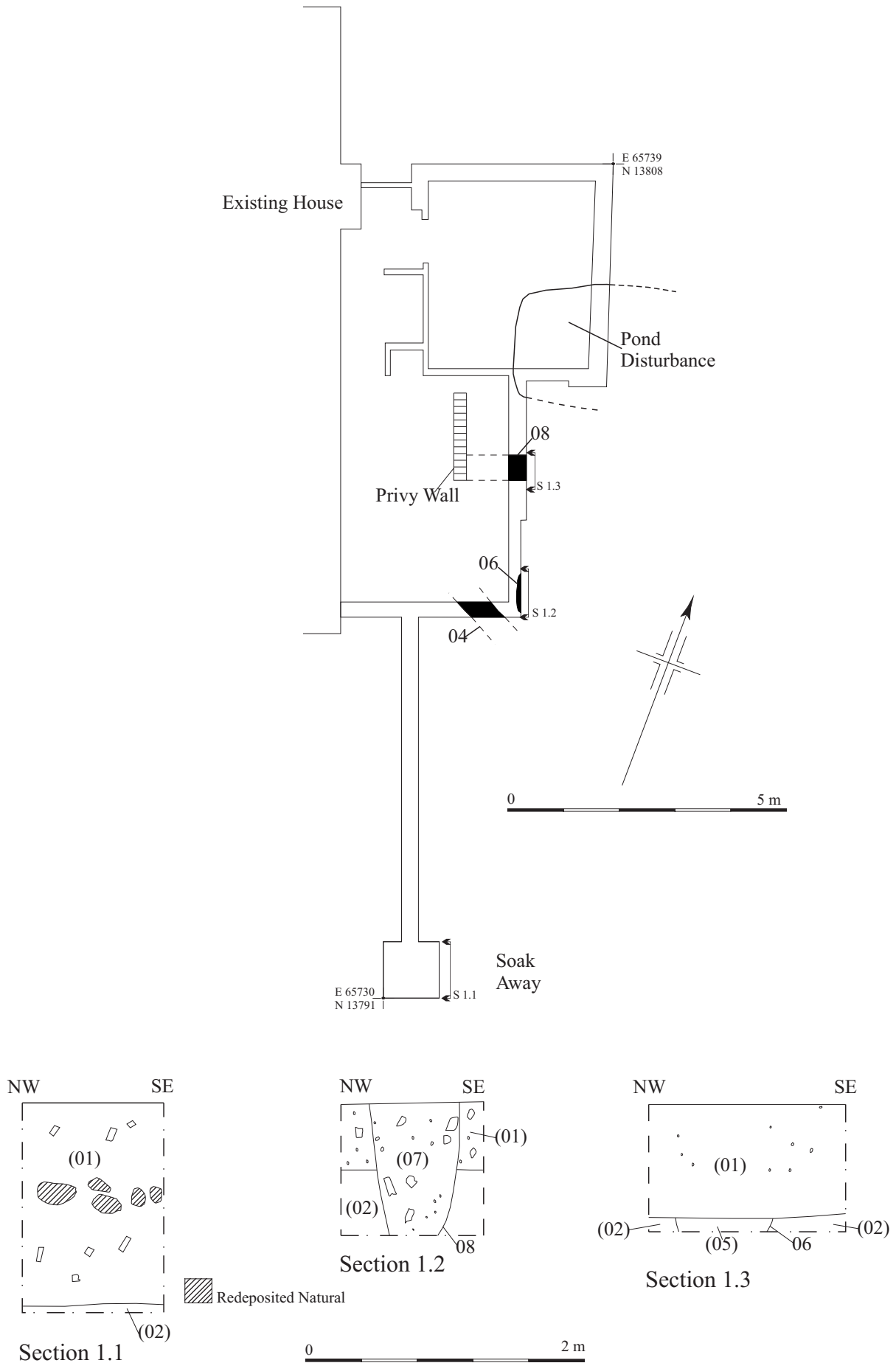


Figure 2. Plans and sections



To the northeast of ditch 04 was a pit 06 that was oval in plan, 0.1m wide by 0.68m long and 0.08m deep, however only a small section was seen within the trench. It had concave edges and a 30-degree slope. It was filled with a moderately compact dark grey brown silty clay (05) with 10% small gravel no larger than 0.02m. It was not fully excavated.

Cut through (01) was the footings trench 08 for an outdoor privy. It had slightly concave sides, sloping at the top at 70-degrees to the bottom at 80-degrees. It was 0.68m x 0.30m and 0.96m deep as seen. It was filled with a compact dark brown grey clay loam (07), containing around 60% small red brick fragments no larger than 0.06m wide by 0.10m long, and also contained pottery dating to the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Both ditch (04) and pit (06) were overlain by a deposit (01) used to raise and flatten the level of the site. This was a moderately compact, mid grey brown clay loam. It contained fragments of red bricks, 15% CBM flecking and around 18%-20% lumps of re-deposited natural clay. It varied in thickness from 0.46m at the northwest end to 1.24m at the southeast end of the site. These features appeared to have been truncated as no buried soil horizons were seen.

## 4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The watching brief was carried out in good conditions with excellent co-operation from the contractors carrying out the groundworks.

## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Pottery by Jenny Winnett

The pottery assemblage comprised 14 sherds with a total weight of 562g. This assemblage consists largely of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century domestic ceramic food related types. 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). 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*.

Context (01) contained 9 sherds of lead glazed redware (Milton Keynes Post-Roman Pottery Type PM8), weighing a total of 493g and representing a Minimum Item Count (MIC) of 3 (based on rims). Two of the rims represent everted rim types typically associated with large domestic pottery types, like mixing bowls and dairy pans. The third rim sherd has a constricted neck, suggesting its use as a large storage vessel. One of the base sherds has a crack that has been sealed by glaze, suggesting the cracking occurred during kiln firing. Deposit (01) also contained a single body/base redware sherd weighing 27g with a brown slipped interior and no exterior decoration. A single sherd of unglazed or degraded glazed redware weighing 7g was also uncovered from context (01) (Milton Keynes Post-Roman Pottery Type PM8). This sherd is a simple thickened rim type. Splashes of glaze are present on the interior.

Context (07) contained 2 conjoining sherds of undecorated white glazed earthenware (Milton Keynes Post-Roman Pottery Type PM25) weighing 107g. The vessel has a simple rounded rim, raised foot ring and holes pierced through its base. It was most

likely used as a meat drainer. There is a remnant of moulded handle on the exterior of the vessel.

Overall, the shapes and decorative types represented here are typical of an early 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century domestic assemblage, although the assemblage is too limited to make any solid conclusions.

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

Cntxt	No	Wt (g)	Milton Keynes Post-Roman pottery type number	Date
(01)	9	493	PM8	17th/18thC
(01)	1	7	PM8	17th/18thC
(01)	1	27		17th/18thC
(07)	2	107	PM25	Late 18 <sup>th</sup> /19thC
Total	14	562		

## 5.2 Environmental Remains

No features were considered to warrant environmental sampling.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The watching brief revealed an undated pit and ditch and the footings for an early modern outdoor privy. The general slope of the surrounding land suggests that the level of the site was landscaped for the construction of No. 15 The Green, which was built in the later part of the 1800's. The ditch 04 may have been wider and deeper, as it appeared to be truncated when the site was levelled and raised. It also appeared to follow the natural slope of the land. The clay-lined base suggests that it may have been a drainage ditch.

## 7 ARCHIVE

### Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

#### Paper Record

The project brief

Written Scheme of Investigation

The photographic and drawn records

The project report

The primary site records

#### Physical record

Finds

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the County Museums' Store under accession number 2009.73

## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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