



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

THE OLD VICARAGE, WOTTON UNDERWOOD,

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

NGR SP 6868 1602

On behalf of
Mrs J. Varley

SEPTEMBER 2010

REPORT FOR Mrs Jane Varley
The Old Vicarage
Wotton Underwood
Buckinghamshire

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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services conducted an archaeological watching brief during the groundwork for a new garage, swimming pool and tennis court at the Old Vicarage Wotton Underwood, Buckinghamshire. No archaeological features were recorded.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)

The site is located at the Old Vicarage, Wotton Underwood (NGR SP 6868 1602). The underlying geology is mudstone of the West Walton Formation (BGS sheet 237).

1.2 Planning Background

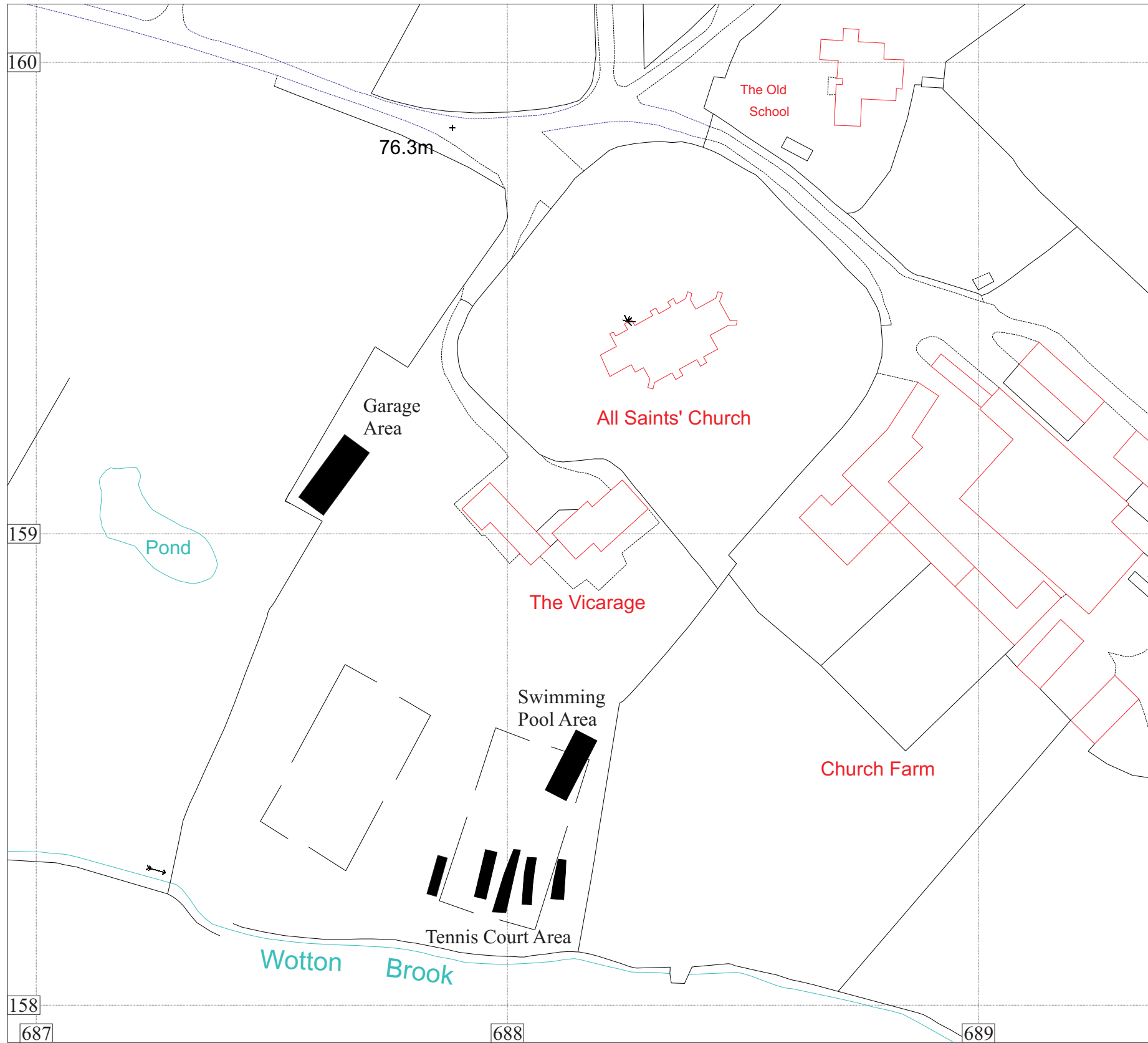
Aylesbury Vale District Council has granted planning permission for the change of land use to residential and the erection of a garage and ancillary storage building and the erection of a swimming pool, pool building and tennis court (10/00955/APP). Due to the potential for the work to disturb archaeological deposits, a planning condition was attached to the permission requiring that an archaeological watching brief be maintained throughout the work. This is in line with PPS5 and Local Plan policies.

1.3 Archaeological Background

A desk-based assessment of the south pavilion of Wotton House (200m to the northwest) was conducted in 2007 although focus was on the house it also covered the area of this proposed development (JMHS 2007). The old vicarage is situated within the core of the late medieval – early post-medieval village.

The earliest view of the village is provided by two Elizabethan maps thought to have been made at some time between AD 1564 and AD 1586, when there were a series of land disputes at Wotton Underwood (Schulz 1939). The manorial map of the lands belonging to Richard Grenville produced around AD 1649 shows the layout of the closes and the broad position of the houses, cottages and other buildings within them. These maps are far from being accurate surveys and are rather broadly representative sketches providing an impression of the village layout.

The origins of All Saints Church, some 50 metres to the north, are thought to date back to the twelfth century. A lintel over the west doorway of the nave is the only surviving architectural element of this period and has clearly been re-used (RCHME 1912). The chancel is thought to have been built around AD 1320 (Calthrop 1927) and here some fourteenth century features still survive along with fifteenth century work in the nave (RCHME 1912; Pevsner and Williamson 1960).



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The map of AD 1649 shows the minister's house and parsonage close just to the south of the churchyard, this is mentioned in documents dating back to AD 1617.

Areas of ridge and furrow marking land under medieval and later cultivation have been recorded in Wotton Underwood. The closest are mostly to the east, south-east and south of the site.

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.
- In particular to record the potential for features relating to medieval or early post-medieval settlement.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Services (BCAS).

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

3.2 Methodology

An archaeologist monitored the course of all invasive groundworks that had the potential to disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

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. A photographic record was also produced.

4 RESULTS

All features were assigned individual context numbers. Numbers in () show feature fills or deposits of material. A general description of the contexts observed are given below.

4.1 Excavation Results

The lowest natural geological deposit in the area was a dark greenish-grey silt-clay (002) that was mottled in dark blue-grey in patches. This was consistent across the

entire site. A sondage excavated in to this in the area of the proposed garage showed it to be over 0.5m thick.

Above this, on the eastern edge of the garage plot was a thin layer or spread of mottled orange-grey silty clay (003) up to 0.15m thick. This spread was thicker towards the south and the east. It appeared to be re-deposited natural. It was observed close to a modern hedge and may have originated during its planting. The area to the south and west of the Old Vicarage has been landscaped with the area of ground raised in height. It is also possible that this spread is related to this activity.

Modern land drains with plastic pipes were noted in the area of the swimming pool and tennis courts.

The uppermost layer was a dark brown-grey clay-loam (001) with a small quantity of stone and pebbles. This was between 0.1m and 0.2m in the garage area, but increased to 0.3m – 0.4m in the area of the swimming pool and tennis courts.

The depth of impact of the tennis court was 0.25m this did not penetrate the topsoil (001). The ground workers generously excavated 5 trenches each approximately 10m long by 2m wide to expose the surface of the natural geology (002).

No archaeological features were observed.

4.2 Reliability of Techniques and Results

The results are considered to be good. The archaeologist was alerted to all invasive groundworks being undertaken on site and was given full access to the site. The work took place on dry days with excellent co-operation from the ground workers.

5 FINDS

5.1 Roman Pottery

A single sherd of Roman coarse ware was recovered, from context (001) in the area of the tennis court, with a sand-tempered reduced fabric that probably originated from the Oxford potteries. It is a rim fragment from a jar, approximately 16cm in diameter and abraded.

5.2 Post-medieval Pottery

The pottery was examined on site and not retained. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit type-series (e.g. Mynard and Zeepvat 1992; Zeepvat et al. 1994).

Context (001) produced a small number of sherds of:

Red Earthenware (PM8) dated 1550+

Creamware (PM23) late 18th – early 19th century

Mass-produced White Earthenware (PM25) mid 19th – 20th century

5.3 Environmental Remains

No environmental samples were taken.

6 DISCUSSION

There were no archaeological features recorded or any evidence for ridge and furrow agriculture in the area. The post-medieval pottery sign little signs of abrasion and are likely not to have been deposited within an agricultural soil. It would seem likely that the area has been used for pasture for several centuries.

7 ARCHIVE

Archive Contents

The archive consists of the following:

Paper record

The project brief
Written scheme of investigation
The project report
The primary site records

Physical Record

The finds

The archive currently is maintained by John Moore Heritage Services and will be transferred to the Buckinghamshire Museum Service.

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