

Herring Homes

**38 & 39 Wood Street & 5 St Leonard's Lane, Wallingford,
Oxfordshire**

NGR SP 6070 8920

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Planning Ref. Nos. P99/W0574 & P99/W0575/LB

Oxford Archaeological Unit

February 2000

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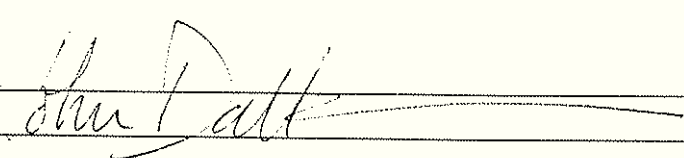
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Planning Ref. Nos. P99/W0574 & P99/W0575/LB

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Date: 11/2/00

Checked by: 

Date: 15/2/00

Approved by:  Head of Fieldwork

Date: 21/2/2000

Oxford Archaeological Unit

February 2000

Summary

In November 1999 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at 38 & 39 Wood Street and 5 St Leonard's Lane, Wallingford, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 6070 8920). A large quantity of made ground containing assorted Victorian artefactual material was identified both internally and externally to the rear of the properties.

1 Introduction

The development proposal (planning application nos. P99/W0574 & P99/W0575/LB) comprised the removal of the existing ground floor bathroom and store from 5 St Leonard's Lane, the construction of new walls at the northern property boundary, the construction of two new conservatories and the formation of three new car parking spaces in the former rear gardens of the properties. An archaeological watching brief was required in accordance with the planning and listed building consents granted in line with PPG 16, as the site is located within an area of proven archaeological potential.

The watching brief was commissioned by Herring Homes. It was undertaken to a brief set by and a WSI agreed with the County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire.

2 Background

The development site is located within the south-east corner of the defences of the Saxon *burh*, first documented in AD 919, which constitute an Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM Oxon 234). A small excavation through the defensive bank was undertaken in 1973, which dated the bank to the 9th century (Durham, cited by Rodwell and Astill in Haslam, 1984). The town's rectilinear street pattern was laid out at the foundation of the *burh*, and it is possible that St Leonard's Lane may have run alongside, or on top of, the defences. It has been suggested that by the 12th century the town occupied all of the interior area of the defences. The distorted east-west alignment of St Leonard's Church suggests that it possibly predates the establishment of the town, and may be located on the site of an earlier Saxon settlement (Rodwell 1974). Previous work has identified considerable quantities of made ground in the vicinity of the site.

The site is located on the east side of Wood Street at its junction with St Leonard's Lane; it lies at approximately 48 m OD and the underlying geology consists of loamy soils overlying river terrace gravels.

3 Aims

The aims of the watching brief were to identify any archaeological remains exposed on site during the course of the works, and to record these to established OAU standards (Wilkinson 1992), in order to secure their preservation by record.

4 Methodology

The watching brief was undertaken by means of separate inspection visits undertaken by an archaeological supervisor; internally excavation was undertaken by hand, externally by JCB supplemented by hand-digging.

Within the constraints imposed by health and safety considerations the deposits exposed were cleaned, inspected and recorded in plan, section and by colour slide and monochrome print photography. Written records were also made on proforma sheets. Soil description utilises standard charts for the approximation of percentage of inclusion types in soil deposits.

5 Results

External excavations comprised: concrete aprons for the new conservatories; minimal stripping/levelling work for the new car parking spaces and associated access; new service runs and trenches for new walls at the northern property boundary. All of these excavations were cut through the same material and revealed an identical sequence. Natural sand and gravel, (3), the true horizon and profile of which had been truncated, was seen at a depth greater than 2 metres in the deepest excavations which were for foul drainage, and was directly sealed by made ground; all remaining excavations took place entirely within this material. Sealing the natural was a highly disturbed mottled light-mid gray silty clay loam, (2), with 5% fine silt and 10% medium-coarse subangular gravel; it also contained a high percentage (35-40%) of artefactual material as described below. This deposit appeared to be consistent from the point at which it sealed natural deposits to the point at which it in turn was sealed by an average of 0.24 m of dark gray clayey loam garden soil, (1). This contained < 5% fine silt and < 10% similar artefactual material.

Internal excavations comprised the reduction of the floor surface in 38 Wood Street prior to the insertion of a new concrete floor. Here a deposit very similar to (1), and consistent to the base of dig, was seen. It contained < 5% fine-medium subangular silt and < 10% artefactual material.

6 Finds

All finds retrieved from both the internal and external excavations were examined on site but not retained. All were dated to the 19th/20th centuries and comprised whole and fragmented housebricks, transfer printed willow pattern, fragments of bottle and window glass and fragmented ceramic storage jars, mostly for jam and marmalade; the earliest date found on one of these was 1871.

7 Environmental results

Full consideration was given to sampling, however due to the absence of any significant archaeology no environmental soil samples were taken.

8 Discussion

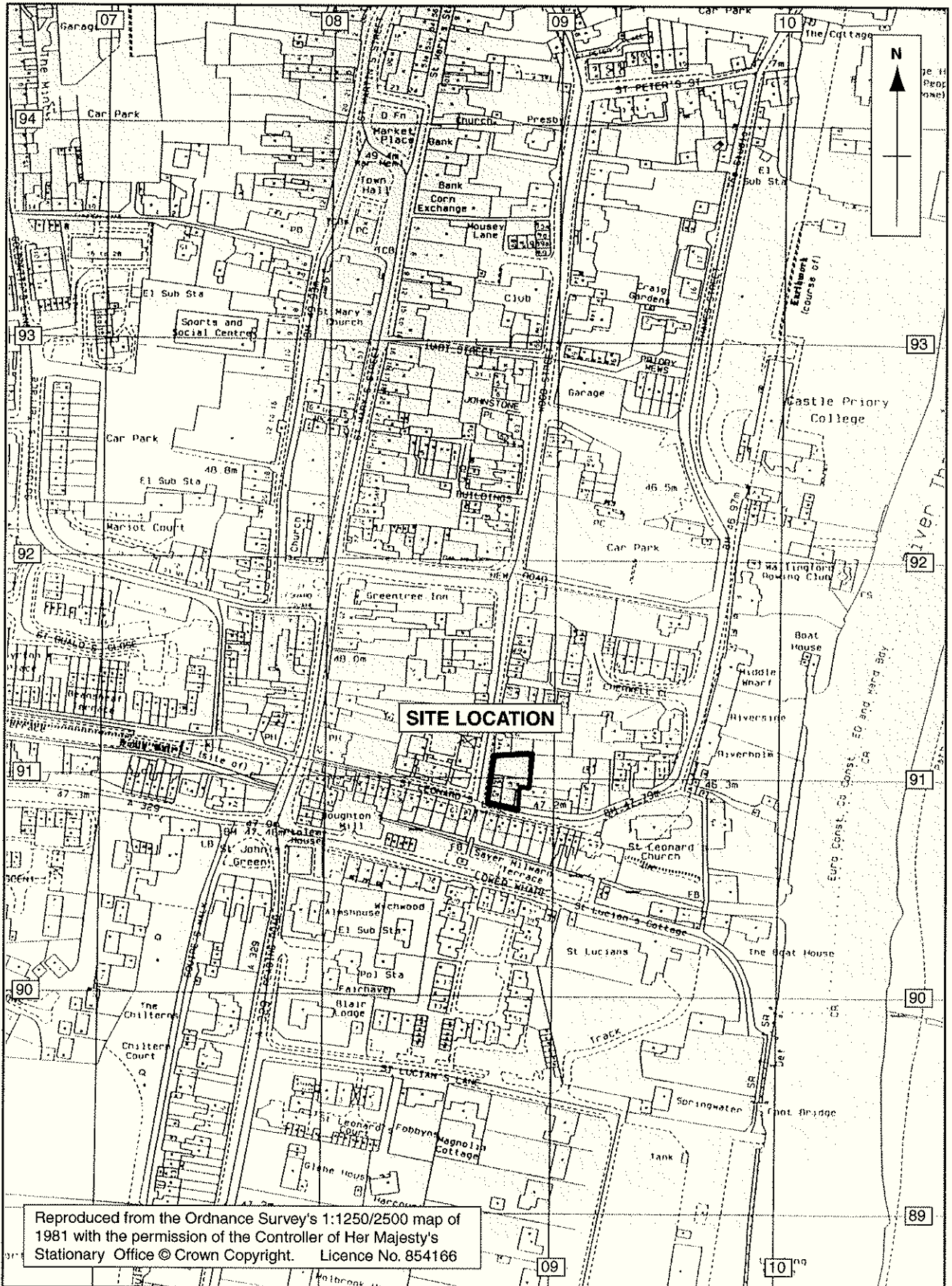
The watching brief identified substantial quantities of made ground sealing natural deposits, which was not entirely unexpected. Any activity predating the 19th/20th centuries would appear entirely to have been truncated. No in-situ archaeology was disturbed during the course of groundworks.

References.

Haslam J (ed) 1984 *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern Britain*, Southampton

Rodwell K (ed) 1974 *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire; A Survey of the New County*, Oxford Archaeological Unit Survey No. 3

Wilkinson, D (ed) 1992 Oxford Archaeological Unit Field Manual, (First edition, August 1992).



scale 1:2500

Location of site

Figure 1



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