

Horner Allen Partnership Ltd

BOX HOUSE
MARKET SQUARE
BAMPTON
OXFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

NGR SP 3140 0313

Planning Application No. W2001/0285

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October 2001

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Prepared by: Robin Bashford Date: September 2001
Checked by: <i>J. Huel</i> Date: <i>17/10/01</i>
Approved by: <i>R. Williams</i> Date: <i>ASSISTANT DIRECTOR</i> <i>19/10/2001</i>

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MARKET PLACE
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SUMMARY

In September 2001, Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at Box House, Bampton (SP 3140 0313). One probable tree throw hole and a possible pit of uncertain date were recorded within the strip foundations.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Permission had been granted by West Oxfordshire District Council for the demolition of the existing garage and the construction of a new detached two-storey extension (Planning Ref. W2001/0285). Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological deposits, a condition for an archaeological watching brief was attached to the permission, in line with PPG16 and local plan policy and in accordance with a brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Council Cultural Services.
- 1.2 The development site lies in the centre of Bampton, on the south west corner of the Market Square at the junction of Bridge Street (A4095) and High Street (B4449).
- 1.3 The site lies at approximately 70 m OD and the geology is second terrace gravel overlying Oxford Clay. The current land use is as a domestic garden.

2 Background

- 2.1 The small market town of Bampton has its origins as an Anglo Saxon religious community with royal connections, whose importance continued into the medieval period. It is mentioned in documentary sources as early as 614AD and again in the Domesday Survey of 1086 when it appears to be one of the richest settlements in the County.
- 2.2 The original layout of the settlement is centred on two points. The triangular market place, with three converging streets, fronting a network of lanes to the rear, and the church of St Mary that stands on the site of a Saxon Minster Church. The Minster Church stood within a large precinct defined by a substantial boundary ditch, the northern part of which has been reasonably well defined, and is still echoed by the line of some roads, particularly Landells.

- 2.4 To the north of the proposed development a late Anglo Saxon sunken-featured building has been identified.

3 Watching Brief Aims

- 3.1 To record the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of archaeological remains within the entire area affected by development.
- 3.2 If exceptional archaeological remains were discovered, for which the resources allocated were insufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard, the OAU would signal to all parties that such an archaeological find had been made.
- 3.3 To make available the results of the investigation.

4 Methodology

4.1 Scope of fieldwork

The watching brief was undertaken on all areas of ground disturbance.

4.2 Recording

- 4.2.1 Archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100, sections were drawn at 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures lay down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (Wilkinson, 1992).

4.3 Finds

- 4.3.1 One small sherd of ?medieval pottery was recovered from pit fill 4.

4.4 Environmental Results

- 4.4.1 Although full consideration was given to various sampling strategies, due to the absence of any suitable deposits and the tight constraints of the excavation, no environmental soil samples were taken.

5 Results

- 5.1 The strip foundations for the new extension were excavated through *c* 0.2 m of topsoil (not illustrated) overlying *c* 0.3 m of garden soil (layer 2), which overlay the terrace gravel (1). Two potential archaeological features were recorded within the foundation trenches.

5.2 The 'Features'

- 5.2.1 Two possible features (cuts 5 and 3) were observed in the southernmost strip foundation trench. The profile of Feature 5 was very irregular and appeared to be significantly undercut on its eastern edge (see Fig. 2, section 1). Additionally, the fill (6) was a mixed deposit of re-deposited gravel and old topsoil, suggesting that the feature was probably a tree throw pit. The fill was sealed beneath garden soil layer 2.
- 5.2.2 Feature 3 (see Fig. 2, section 2) appeared to be more regular and was observed in section in the south west corner of the strip foundation trenches cutting the gravel (1). The conjectured limit of the feature would suggest a diameter in excess of 2 m, and

where observed in section the feature was 0.75 m in depth. It was filled by a mid grey brown silty clay deposit (4) which produced one small sherd of ?medieval pottery. The fill was sealed by the garden soil (2).

6 Discussion And Interpretation

- 6.1 Given the limited impact of the strip foundation trenches, attributing a definitive function to the features observed is problematic.
- 6.2 Feature 5 is almost certainly a tree throw pit, whereas Feature 3, whilst possibly representing a pit - is of uncertain date and function.

References.

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

Mayes, Hardy and Blair The Excavation of Early Iron Age
2000 Remains on Land to the West of
 Church View, Bampton: Oxoniensia LXV, 267-291.

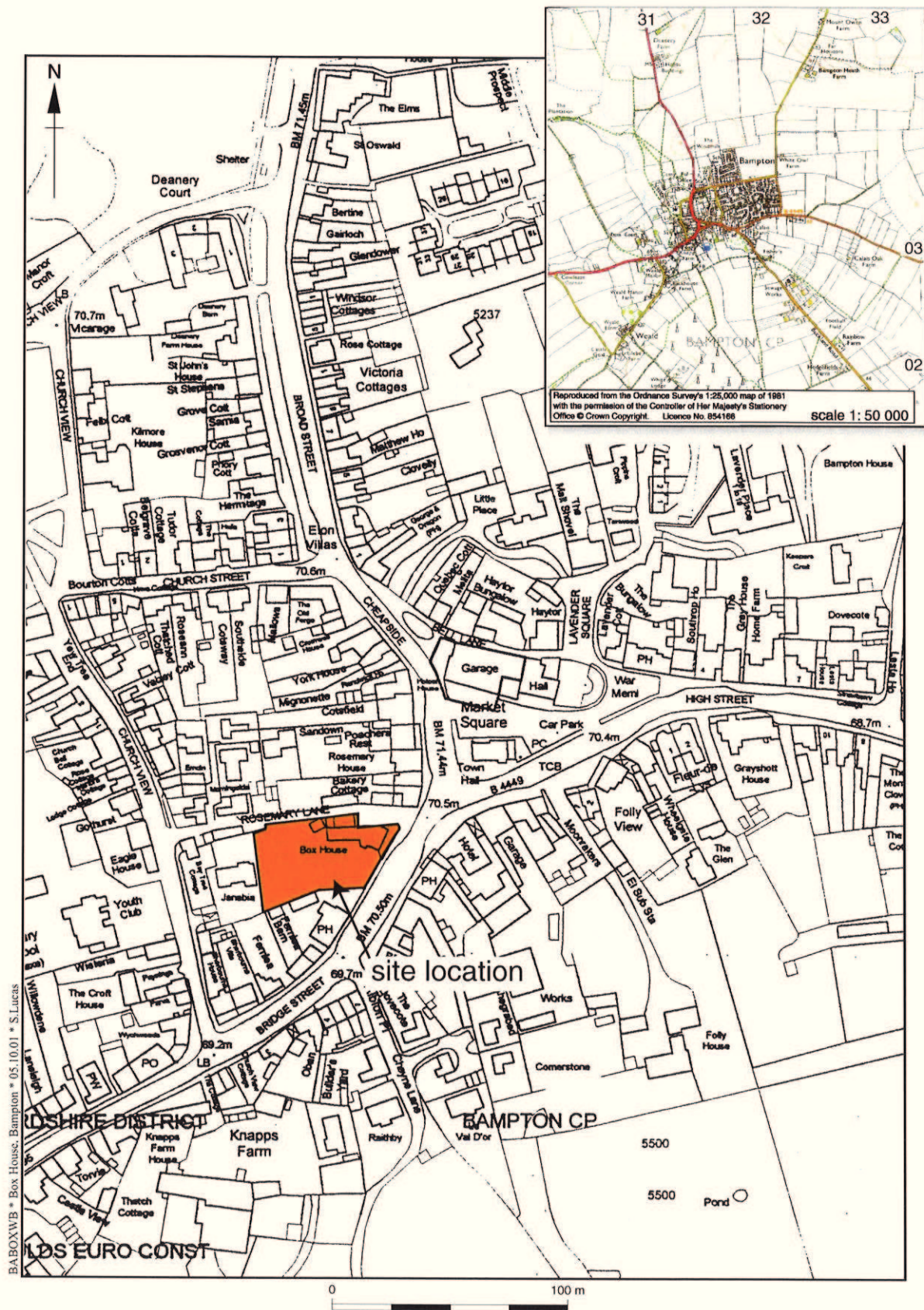
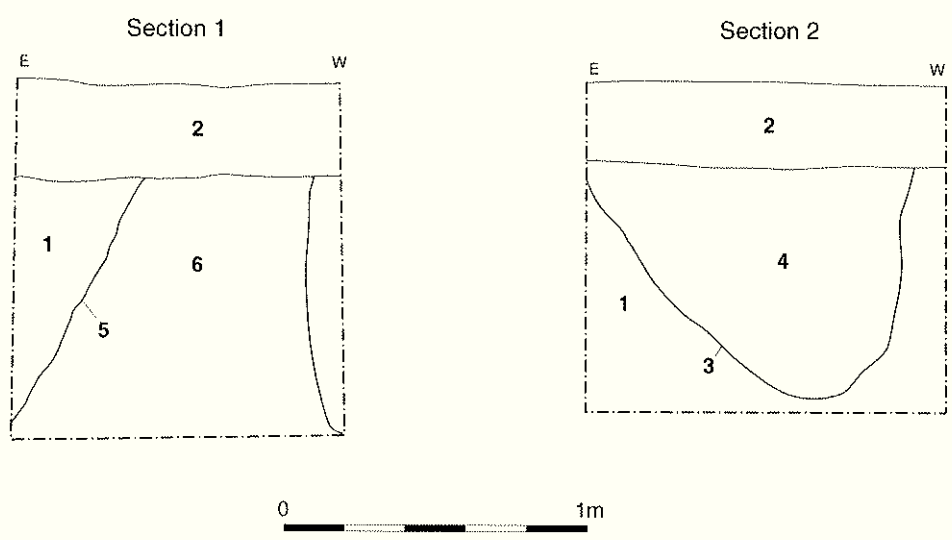
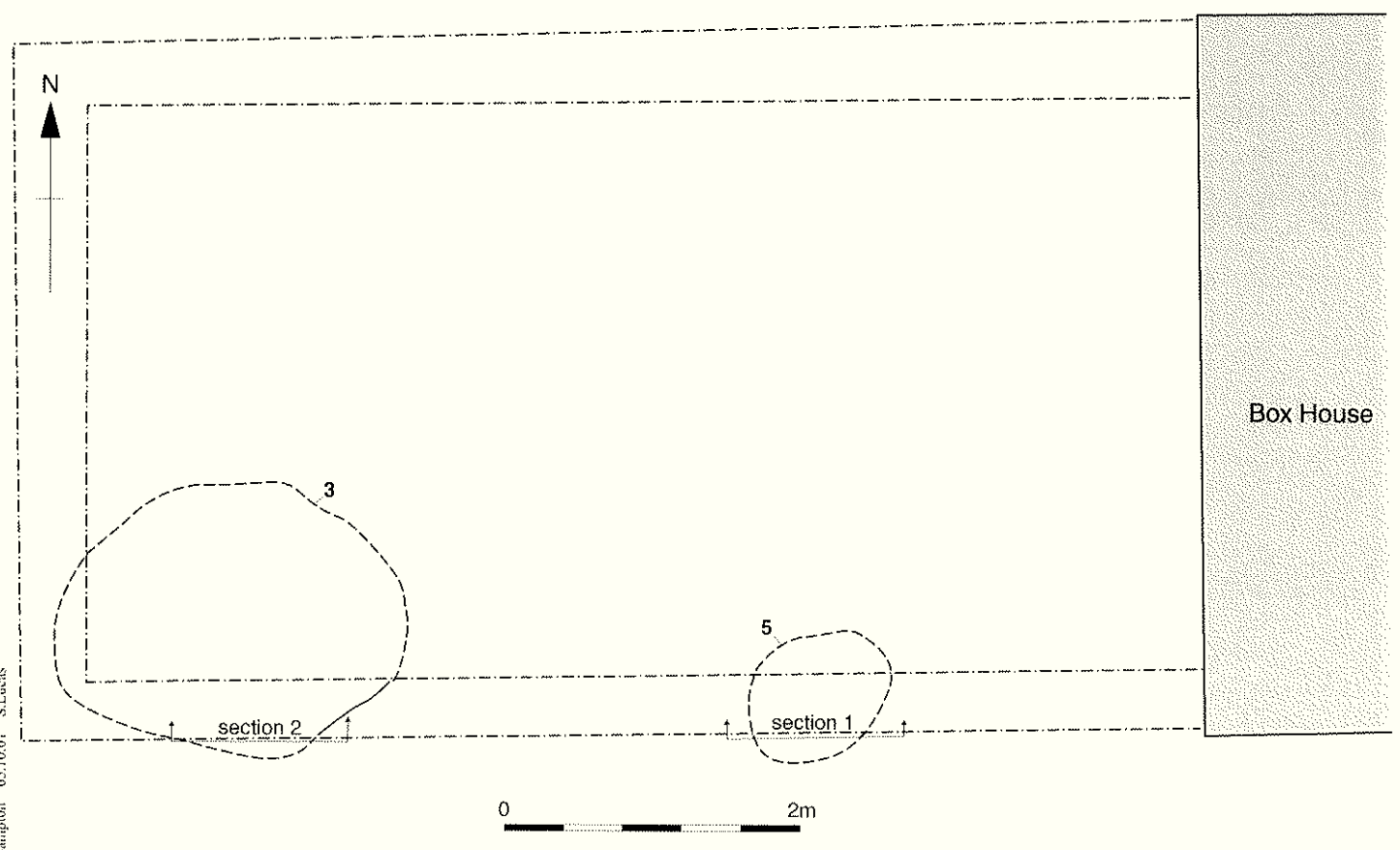


Figure 1: site location



Plan



05.10.01 3.1.04.05

Figure 2: plan and sections.



OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES

Tel: 01865 263800 Fax: 01865 793496

email: postmaster@oau-oxford.com www.oau-oxford.com



Director and Chief Executive: David Jennings B.A., M.I.F.A. Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited.
Private Limited Company Number: 1618597 Registered Charity Number: 285627.
Registered Office: Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES