

Aileen Watson

PLUMTREE COTTAGE
DORCHESTER-UPON-THAMES
OXFORDSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

NGR SP 5793 9388

Planning Application No. P01/W0220/FUL

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Prepared by: Robin Bashford Date: September 2001
Checked by: <i>J.R. Hiller</i> . J.R. HILLER Date: <i>26/9/01</i> .
Approved by: <i>R. Williams</i> Assistant Director Date: <i>28/9/2001</i>

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SUMMARY

In August 2001, Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook a watching brief at Plumtree Cottage, Dorchester, Oxfordshire (SP 5793 9388). The foundations were excavated through a deposit of garden soil and did not impact on any significant archaeological deposits or features.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Permission had been granted by South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of an extension to the existing property at Plumtree Cottage, Dorchester-Upon-Thames (Planning Ref. P01/W0220/FUL). 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. Bridge End is located off the High Street within the vicinity of the southern defences of the Roman town of Dorchester at (NGR SP 5793 9388). It adjoins Watling Lane and Wittenham Lane to the west. The River Thame lies close by to the east whilst the River Thames is located approximately 500 m to the south.
- 1.2 The site lies on the Thames Valley terrace gravels. Brickearth has been recorded overlying the gravels further to the north around Dorchester Abbey Church, although gault and greensand deposits are located beyond the gravel terraces (British Geological Survey, Sheet 254). The site lies at c 49 m OD.

2 Background

- 2.1 Bridge End, situated to the south of the main settlement, was historically the site of the river crossing of the main road through Dorchester. This road, linking Oxford and South Wales, provided much of the town's commerce. The

earliest reference to a bridge is in 1146. The tithe map of 1845 records Bridge Edge Common as lying west of the River Thames.

- 2.2 The area of Dorchester-on-Thames has settlement origins dating back to the Neolithic period and has been known as one of the classic Neolithic sites in England. The area contains prehistoric features and monuments such as a cursus, which could only be identified through crop marks, and various enclosures and barrows.
- 2.3 The earthwork monument known as the Big Rings was actually a large henge monument and with a wood henge located c 600m to the east. Other monuments in the locale include Castle Hill, Wittenham Clumps hillfort and Dyke Hills associated Iron Age Opidum.
- 2.4 The area of proposed development lies to the south of the defences of the Roman town of Dorchester, whose name is of Roman origin. Bede first mentions the place name of Dorcic or Dorciccaestrae in the 8th century. Crop marks have been identified that are associated with a fort and wooden buildings associated with 1st century Roman fortifications.
- 2.5 Two inhumations of Roman date were discovered some 70 m away from the Plumtree Cottage site at 1 Orchard Haven in 1965 during the construction of new dwellings. Belgic and Roman pottery and slag were also found during the excavation of the foundation trenches of this development.
- 2.6 In 1982, a single inhumation was found some 100 m from Plumtree Cottage in the grounds of Green Acre, Bridge End (PRN 13029), and was thought to have been late Roman in date as the grave was cut through an earlier Romano-British feature.
- 2.7 In 1874 two burials accompanied by early Anglo-Saxon grave goods, were excavated at Dyke Hills that lies approximately 500 m south west of Bridge End.

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

- 4.1.1 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

4.4.1 20th-century material associated with the demolished conservatory was observed but not retained.

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 Following the demolition of the existing conservatory and associated concrete surface, the strip foundations for the new extension were excavated to a depth of approximately 1 m. The trenches revealed a 0.2 m thick deposit of topsoil/demolition debris overlying a 0.8 m thick deposit of mid-dark grey clay silt garden soil. No significant archaeological features or deposits were observed during the groundwork.

6 Discussion And Interpretation

6.1 The deposits observed during the watching brief are consistent with the use of the site as a garden. Although no archaeological features or deposits were observed, it is possible that archaeological remains survive beneath the garden soil. The impact of this development was not sufficient to expose any archaeological levels.

References.

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

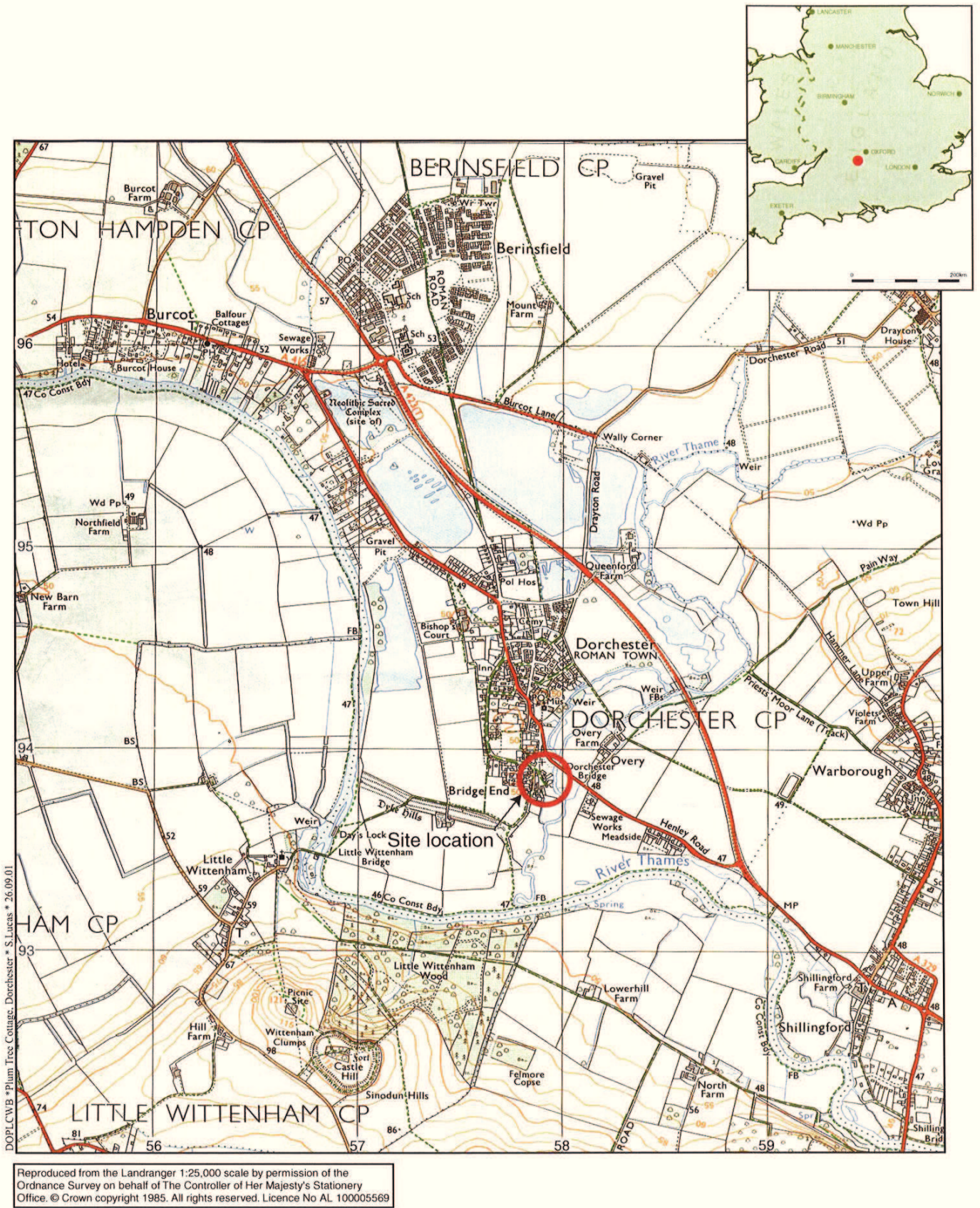
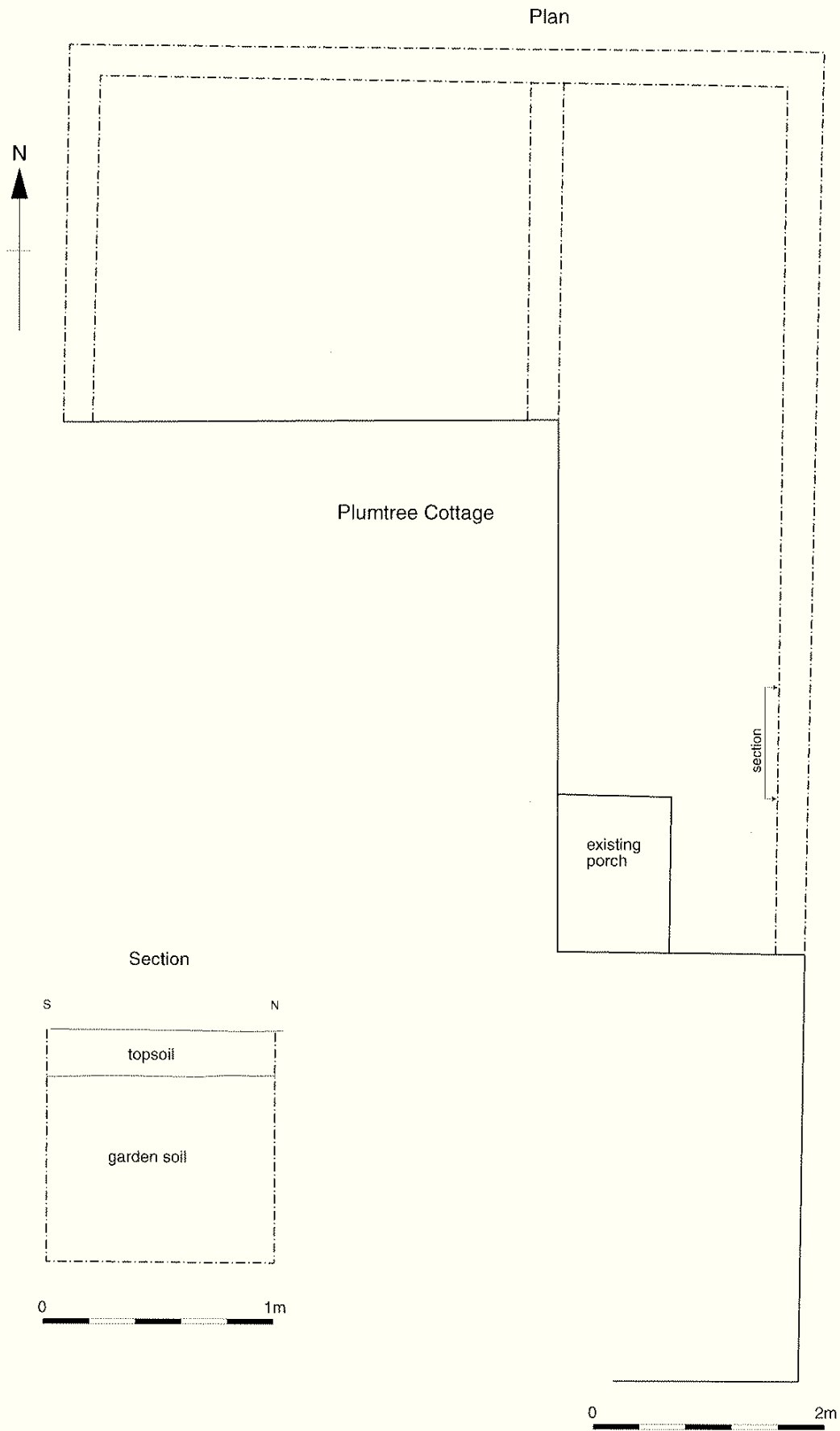


Figure 1: Site location plan.



DDPLCWB *Plum Tree Cottage, Dorechester * S.Lucas * 26.09.01

Figure 2: Plan and Section.



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