

**Ferry Nab, Ferry Lane, Medmenham,
Marlow, Buckinghamshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr Richard Marton

by Pamela Jenkins and Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code FNM03/121

August 2004

Summary

Site name: Ferry Nab, Ferry Lane, Medmenham, Marlow, Buckinghamshire

Grid reference: SP 8062 8381

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 7th January–19th August 2004

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Pamela Jenkins and Andy Taylor

Site code: FNM 03/121

Area of site:

Summary of results: A chalk built wall and floor, undated but possibly of medieval date was observed

Monuments identified: Wall and floor

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum Service in due course

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	Steve Preston ✓ 30.08.04

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Report 03/121

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Ferry Nab, Ferry Lane, Medmenham, Marlow, Buckinghamshire (SP 8062 8381) (Fig 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Roger Danks of Danks Badnell Architects, Kings Stables, 3/4 Osborne Mews, Windsor, Berkshire, SL4 3DE on behalf of Mr Richard Marton, Ferry Nab, Ferry Lane, Medmenham, Marlow, Buckinghamshire, SL7 2LZ.

Planning consent (App no 03/07578/FUL) has been granted by Wycombe District Council for the construction of extensions and alterations to an existing house at Ferry Nab, Medmenham, Buckinghamshire. As a condition (4) of the planning permission an archaeological watching brief was required during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the District's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Radford, Archaeological Officer with Buckinghamshire County Archaeological Service. The fieldwork was undertaken by Pamela Jenkins and Andy Taylor between the 7th January and 19th August 2004 and the site code is FNM 03/121.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Buckinghamshire Museum Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the eastern side of Ferry Lane to the north of the river Thames (Figs. 1 and 2). The underlying geology is river gravel (BGS 1980) and the site lies at a height of c.30m AOD.

Archaeological background

The site lies within the precinct of Medmenham Abbey, which was a Cistercian foundation in the 13th century but with the possibility of earlier activity on the site. Information about the abbey has recently been summarized (Farley 2001) and this text presents only a brief summary of this work. The abbey was founded as a cell of Woburn Abbey in a charter by King John in 1200 but was not formed until 1204. The monks were subsequently recalled but it was recolonized in 1213 as an independent abbey. After the dissolution some buildings still

existed according to an account of 1718 and the current Abbey House to the east of Ferry Nab has components dating from 1595 and stands on the site of the original abbey, though where within the complex is unclear. Various watching briefs in the environs of the abbey have revealed a variety of wall footings, a lime-floored building, a substantial wall, ditch or cellar and various human burials. However, the position of the church and a main components of the abbey are not known with full confidence and the layout and use of ancillary structures is poorly known. Although it is thought that the majority of the abbey complex lies to the east of Ferry Nab, it is possible that deposits could extend into the area covered by the watching brief.

Ferry Nab stands on the site of the Medmenham Hotel which was in existence from at least 1895. Ferry Nab appears to have achieved its present layout before 1925 and seems to reflect rebuilding on the site of the demolished hotel.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits, which would be damaged or destroyed by the new groundworks. This was to involve the examination of areas stripped of topsoil/overburden, and excavation of foundations, drain and service trenches if appropriate.

Results

The Extension Footings

Two sets of extension footings were dug, one set at the south eastern end of the house and the other at the north-western end.

The footings were dug to a depth of up to 2m through made ground. They were typically 0.75m wide. The fill comprised earth with much chalk, sometimes in largish fragments which probably represents material imported to the site as a precaution against flooding or perhaps, the remains of the demolition of the Medmenham Hotel. No structural remains were visible in the footing trenches though conditions for observation were poor.

Service trenches

In a pipe trench on the north side of the building a chalk-built wall was observed (Figs. 3 and 4). This comprised chalk blocks, mostly sub-rounded and 0.1m across with some flint nodules (50). It was set within a construction cut (1) which had been backfilled with a sandy clay containing chalk pieces, the occasional flint nodule and with

charcoal flecks (51). The wall was badly truncated by service trenches and other modern interventions and its orientation is not known but is probably north-south. It existed for a depth of 0.5m but the full depth was not exposed, and neither was the natural geology. To the west lay a chalk deposit (52) which may be a floor relating to the wall but the relationship could not be determined.

A second pipe trench was dug across the northern part of the house which was between 0.49m and 0.8m deep and 0.4m to 0.9m wide. Below the surface, made ground to a depth of 0.7m was observed overlying a hard packed chalk layer (54) which was 0.07m thick. This layer may be the same as (52) recorded to the south. This in turn overlay a dark brown/grey silty clay with chalk flecks and charcoal (55). The natural geology (gravel) was not observed. No dating evidence was recovered for the two layers which might represent floor surfaces, or possibly consolidation layers again for flood prevention. Many services trenches were noted for the house. The wall recorded previously to the south was not observed.

The Soakaway

The soakaway pit was located on the northern side of the house and measured 1.50m in length, 1.10m at its western edge and 0.80m at its eastern edge. It was dug to a depth of 1.20m and the stratigraphy consisted of topsoil overlying subsoil overlying clay and chalk, natural gravel was not observed. No archaeology was observed. The drainage trenches which connected this to the building were shallow and set within made ground.

Finds

The only finds recovered were late post medieval brick and tile and a single sherd of late post-medieval stoneware from the made ground. These finds were not retained.

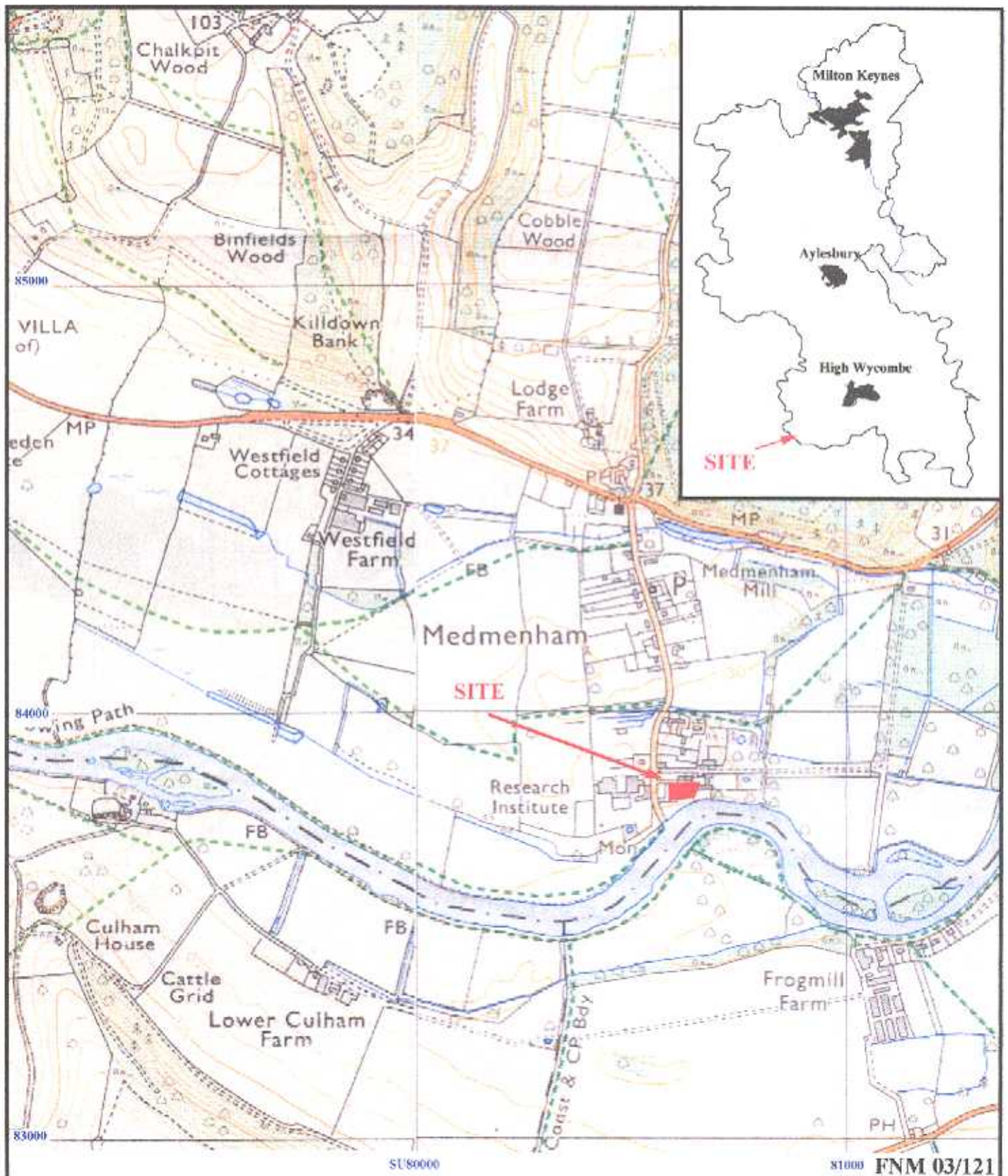
Conclusion

The watching brief has allowed observation of an area adjacent to the medieval abbey complex at Medmenham and has noted the presence of a wall or foundation made from chalk. The wall was badly truncated and its orientation and function were unclear. Its construction cut contained no datable finds. However, the use of chalk in this fashion suggests that this is likely to represent a medieval or early post-medieval building and may represent an ancillary structure for the abbey.

References

BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 254, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth

Farley, M, 2001, 'Medmenham Abbey, Medmenham, Buckinghamshire, results from some archaeological watching briefs', Michael Farley Archaeology, Aylesbury
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

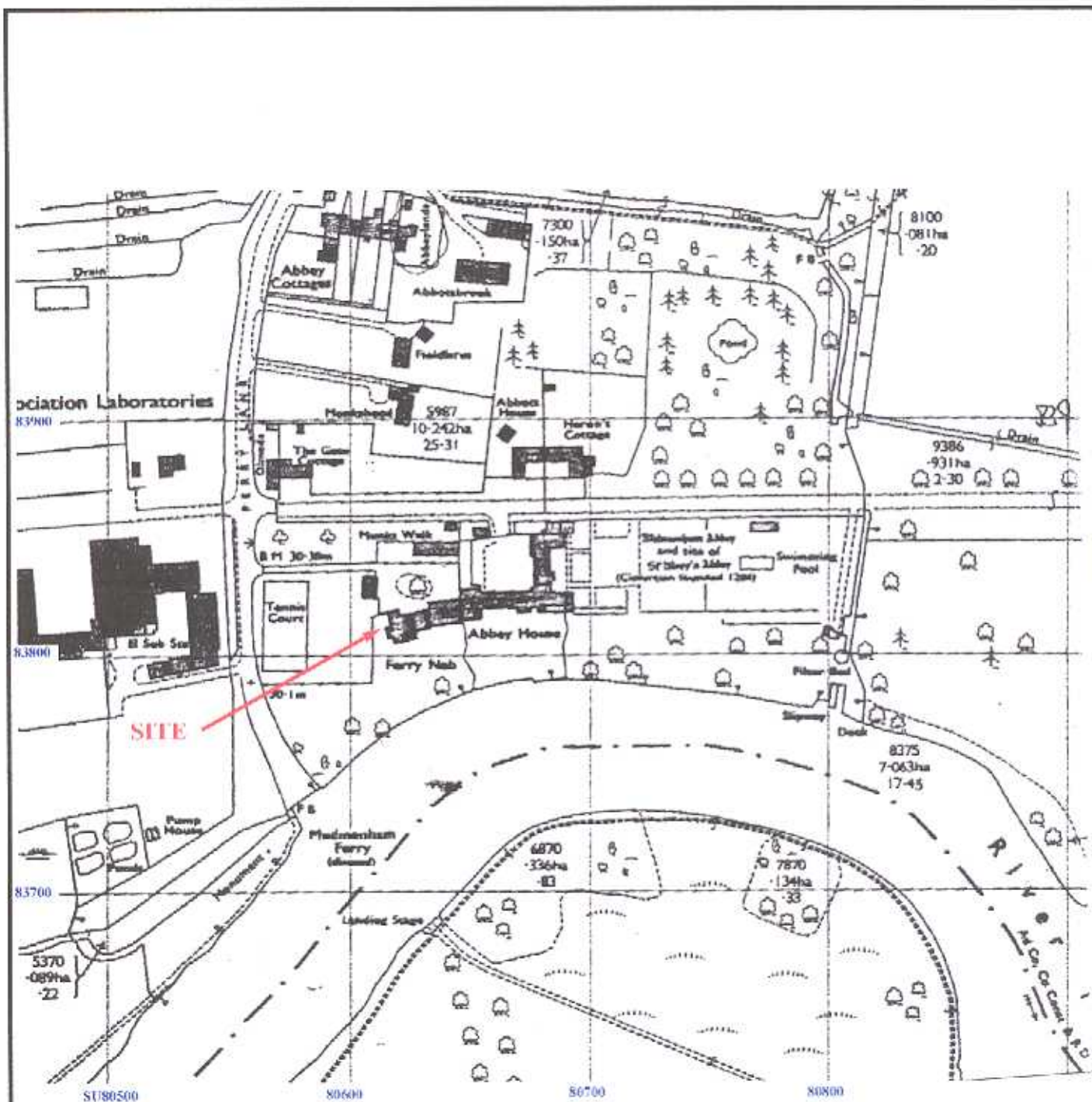


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Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within Medmenham and Buckinghamshire.

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Buckinghamshire, 2004
Archaeological Watching Brief

Figure 2. Location of site within Medmenham.
Scale 1:2500.

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Figure 3. Location of watching brief observations.

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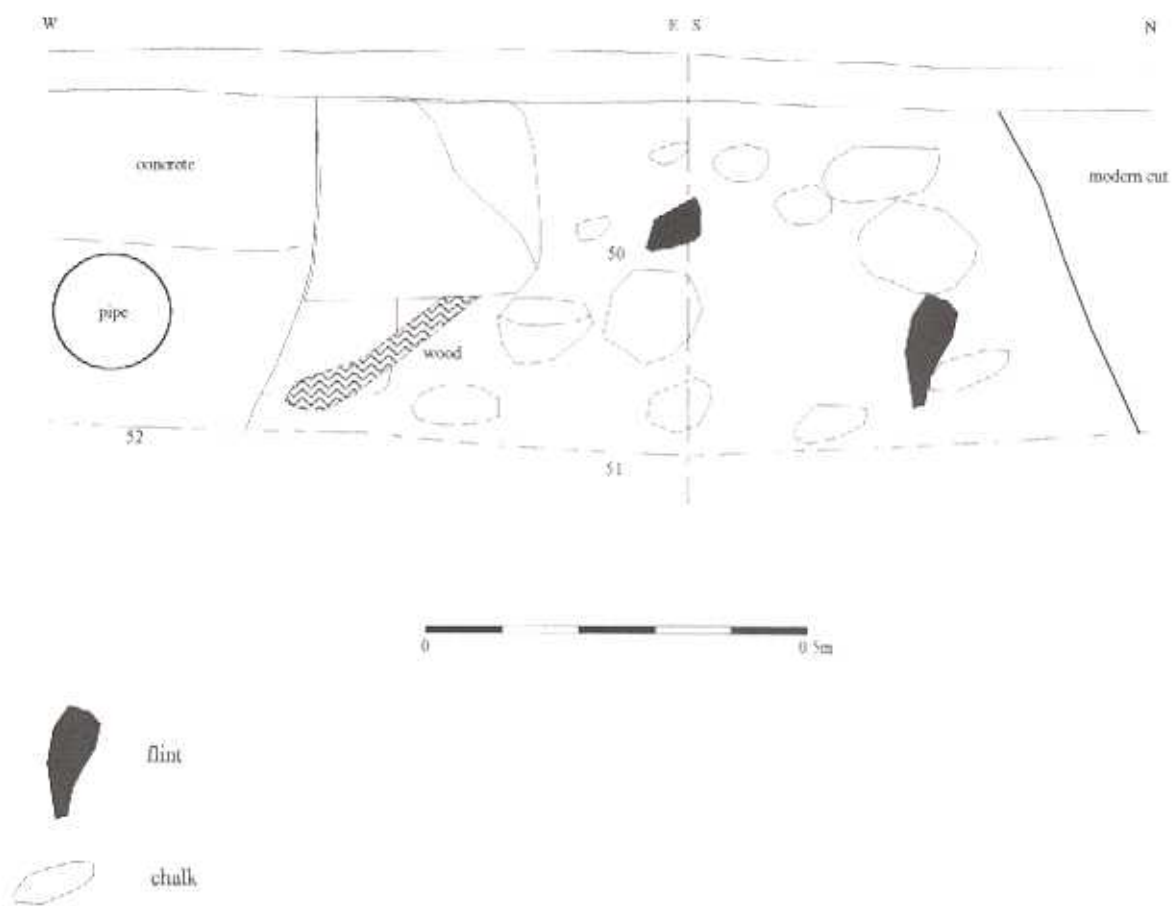


Figure 4. Section of possible wall.