THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

SERVICES

Tesco Car Park, Tring Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire

Archaeological Evaluation

by Pierre-Damien Manisse

Site Code: OEW 20/81

(SP 8288 1382)

Land at Tesco Car Park, Tring Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for McCarthy and Stone

by Pierre-Damien Manisse

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code TRA 22/45

March 2022

Summary

Site name: Tesco Car Park, Tring Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire

Grid reference: SP 8288 1382

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 7th - 9th March 2022

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Pierre-Damien Manisse

Site code: TRA 22/45

Area of site: *c.* 0.32ha

Summary of results: The evaluation was successfully carried out but despite the possibility of archaeological deposits being present, the trenches revealed no features nor finds of archaeological interest. In particular there was no sign of the expected line of a Roman road. The site is considered to have low archaeological potential.

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 16.03.22
	Steve Preston✓ 14.03.22

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Land at Tesco Car Park, Tring Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire
An Archaeological Evaluation

by Pierre-Damien Manisse

Report 22/45

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land at Tesco car park, Tring Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire (SP 8288 1382) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Helen Martin-Bacon of Avalon Heritage Ltd, Dairyhouse Lane, Cheadle, Stoke-on-Trent, ST10 2PW on behalf of McCarthy and Stone, 4th Floor, 100 Holdenhurst Road, Bournemouth, BH8 8AQ.

Planning permission (app 199/03684/APP) has been granted by Buckinghamshire Council for new development on a *c.* 0.32ha of land at the site. The consent for the erection of 58 extra care apartments and associated communal facilities, access, parking and landscaping is subject to a condition (18) relating to archaeology. It requires a programme of investigation in the form of trial trenching followed, if required, by appropriate mitigation. This is in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019) and the Council's policies on archaeology.

This report documents the results of the trenching investigation. The fieldwork was carried out according to a specification (Martin-Bacon 2021) approved by Ms Lucy Lawrence, Archaeology Officer for Buckinghamshire Council. The fieldwork was supervised by Pierre-Damien Manisse on 7th to 9th March 2022 and the site code is TRA 22/45.

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 a rectangular plot, part of a Tesco car park, off Tring Road, Aylesbury (Fig 1). It is bordered to the north-west by Lester Road, to the west by the superstore. The car park extends further to the south-east and to the east are residential properties on Price Close. The Grand Union Canal flows 30m to the north beyond Lester Road.

The geology of the site is mapped as alluvium with Kimmeridge Clay to the north and Portland limestones, clays and sands to the south (BGS 1990). The site is *c.*80m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) and was generally level, notwithstanding a very slight incline to drain water.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Stewart-Phillips 2018). To summarize it stems mainly from its location on the projected course of Akeman Street, a major Roman road. Though outside any archaeological priority areas, Walton's historic core lies only *c*. 500m south-west of the site. Walton was a substantial middle/late Saxon settlement (Dalwood et al 1989; Farley, 1976, Ford and Howell 2004) In the vicinity of the site are archaeological records for most periods, mostly as isolated finds, ranging from Neolithic/ Mesolithic (flints found south of Tring Road for example), Late Iron Age and Roman (watching brief at Croft Road 1987), and a Saxon cemetery in Walton. Medieval occupation is better documented with excavations conducted at 95-97 Walton Street or at 67-71 Walton Road. The most significant and recent discovery relative to this site is the result of an archaeological evaluation in 2017 at the site of BPC Hazells to the immediate north-east. It recorded a linear feature that could be one of the Akeman street roadside ditches and that could possibly continue into the Tesco car park. Finally, a 20th-century factory (Hazell, Watson and Viney Print Works), now demolished, occupied the site prior to its conversion for the car park and its presence may have significantly affected any archaeological remains that may have been present.

Objectives and methodology

The general aims of the trial trenching as outlined in the WSU (martin-Bacon 2021) were to:

verify the presence or absence of archaeological remains;

determine the level of truncation to archaeological remains arising from later activities;

determine the character, date, extent and distribution of any archaeological remains and their potential significance in accordance with NPPF (2019);

ensure that any archaeological remains which may be disturbed by groundworks within the site can be appropriately sampled and recorded;

produce relative and absolute dating and phasing for deposits and features recorded;

establish the character of these features and deposits in order to define functional areas and spatial relationships between differing zones of activity;

produce information on the economy and local environment and compare and contrast this with the results of other excavations in the region;

to inform upon the need for further archaeological work prior to development commencing;

to disseminate the results of the fieldwork through an appropriate level of publication; and

inform upon appropriate mitigation measures should significant archaeological remains which require further investigation and/or preservation in situ are uncovered.

Specific research objectives were to address the following:

to determine whether the site contains archaeological deposits and features associated with periods which pre-date the Roman era.

determine whether the site contains archaeological deposits and features associated with Akeman Street, the Roman Road;

determine the presence of archaeological remains which date to the medieval and/or post-medieval period.

determine whether any archaeological features of any period compare with comparable contemporary settlement and/or activity in the vicinity?

what is the palaeo-environmental setting of the area?

identify any research themes relevant to the nature of the site which are contained within the Solent-Thames Archaeological Framework (Hey and Hind 2014).

Any archaeological features were to be cleaned, recorded and sufficiently sampled to satisfy to the aim of the project. It was proposed to dig four trenches using a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Each trench was to be 16m long and 2m wide to satisfy to a 4% sample requirement of the development area. A 10% contingency was included to clarify initial findings if required.

Results

Trench locations had to be adjusted to avoid live services (Fig. 3). Trench 1 was shifted to the south-west and reoriented on a SW-NE axis. Trenches 3 and 4 were kept in, or very close to, their original position. To facilitate spoil management and general circulation on site, Trench 2, designed to locate the projected Akeman Street was moved to provide a continuous trench with trench 3 but remained on the projected course of the road, which unfortunately very closely matched the path of the various services. In consultation with the archaeological monitors (Ms Lucy Lawrence and Mr Phil Markham), it was decided to open a fifth limited trench at an angle to trenches 2-3 and perpendicular to the hypothetical course of the Roman road.

A metal detector (Minelabs Vanquish 540) was used in the trench and on spoil heaps with the latter visually inspected to check for finds. No artefacts earlier than the late 20th Century were found.

The trenches breadth varied between 1.70m to 2.10m, their lengths varied from 4.40m to 32m and depths between 1.30m to 2.30m. A complete list of trenches giving length, breadth, depth and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

There was no topsoil as the site was entirely Tarmacadamed. Tarmac, 0.08m thick, was broken first and put aside. The stratigraphy encountered in all the trenches was the same with only variation in the thickness of deposits (Appendix 1; Fig. 4). Under the Tarmac was a compact made ground made of coarse rubble, 0.42m thick. This light brown preparatory layer was separated from the loose brick rubble below by a membrane. The bricks are the residual trace of the demolition of the 20th century factory. Its thickness could vary considerably

depending of the position of the trench compared to the footprint of the former building. A few slabs of concrete were also observed in this layer. It overlay what was considered as a buried topsoil, (50), a firm dark grey clayey silt, 0.25-0.30m thick. Some land drains were cut into this deposit. Below this was, a dark bluish grey to mid grey clay (51), with very rare gravel inclusions. Despite its darker shade, in the absence of any trace of human activity, it was considered as the top geological horizon. In places there were some rare pockets of grey clayey sandy gravels within. It became more gravelly and lighter towards its base until a light grey and yellow clayey sand was reached (52). This lower geological horizon was uneven, sometimes appearing quite high but most of the time masked by layer 51.

Trench 1 (Fig. 3; Pls 1 and 2)

Trench 1 was aligned SW-NE and was 15.80m long and 1.90m wide. Its maximum depth varied from 1.45m at the SW to 2m in the NE. The middle part of the trench was at 1.20m corresponding to the top of layer 52. The brick rubble was absent at the extreme SE end, but from 2m to the NW end of the trench increased gradually in thickness up to 0.40m. No finds were recovered nor archaeological features observed.

Trench 2-3 (Fig. 2; Pl. 2)

The combined Trench 2-3 was aligned WSW-ENE and was 35m long and 1.90m wide. The maximum depth reached was 2m, but on average it varied between 1.45m to 1.75m. The water table was reached in the western end at 2m deep while the other parts of the trench infilled quickly with residual water from older land drains. The brick rubble, from 0.50m in the first 10m, thickened in the middle section of the trench to about 0.70m. No finds were recovered and no features of archaeological interest were present.

Trench 4 (Fig. 3; Pl. 3)

Trench 4 was aligned SE - NW and was 17m long and 1.70-1.90m wide. Most of it was at a depth of 1.30m with deeper slots at both ends (1.80m). A deposit of pure yellow sand was dug into natural deposit 52 at the NW end. It was about 0.30m deep and 2m wide and presumably was a dump of builders' sand. No finds were recovered.

Trench 5 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 4)

Trench 5 was aligned SW - NE and was 4.40m long, merging with trench 2-3. It was 2.30m deep. The brick rubble was here particularly prominent, up to 0.75m thick. No features were noted and no finds were recovered.

Finds

No finds of any archaeological interest were recovered.

Conclusion

The site had been subjected to significant development in the 20th century, first with the construction of a factory and then after its demolition by the erection of a car park for the adjacent superstore. As a result there is a level of modern overburden of about 0.90-1.25m over the original ground level at the beginning of the previous century. This buried topsoil was only cut by some land drains. The underlying geology or transitional layer appeared at a depth of 1.15-1.25m below modern ground surface and was pristine. There was no trace of any road surface nor flanking ditches that could relate to Akeman Street, the Roman road, nor any evidence of any other occupation. As a consequence, the site is considered to have low archaeological potential

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

Trench	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Comment*
1	15.80	1.90	1.50 to 2.00	0–0.08m tarmac; 0.08-0.50m made ground; 0.50-0.90m brick demolition rubble rubble; 0.90-1.20m buried topsoil (51); 1.20-1.45m greenish or bluish grey clay (52); 1.45+ yellowish and light greyish clayey sandy gravels. **[Pl. 2]**
2-3	35.00	1.80	1.45 to 1.75; 2.00 in slots	0–0.08m tarmac; 0.08-0.50m made ground; 0.50-1.00m brick demolition rubble rubble; 1.00-1.25m buried topsoil; 1.25-2m greenish or bluish grey clay; 2m+ yellowish and light greyish clayey sandy gravels. **[Pl. 1]**
4	17.00	1.70 to 1.90	1.30 to 1.50; 2.00 in slot	0–0.08m tarmac; 0.08-0.50m made ground; 0.50-0.90m brick demolition rubble rubble; 0.90-1.15m buried topsoil; 1.15-1.60m greenish or bluish grey clay; 1.60m+ yellowish and light greyish clayey sandy gravels. **[Pl. 4]**
5	4.40	2.10	2.30	0–0.08m tarmac; 0.08-0.50m made ground; 0.50-1.25m brick demolition rubble rubble; 1.25-1.55m buried topsoil; 1.55-2m greenish or bluish grey clay; 2m+ yellowish and light greyish clayey sandy gravels. **[Pl. 3]**

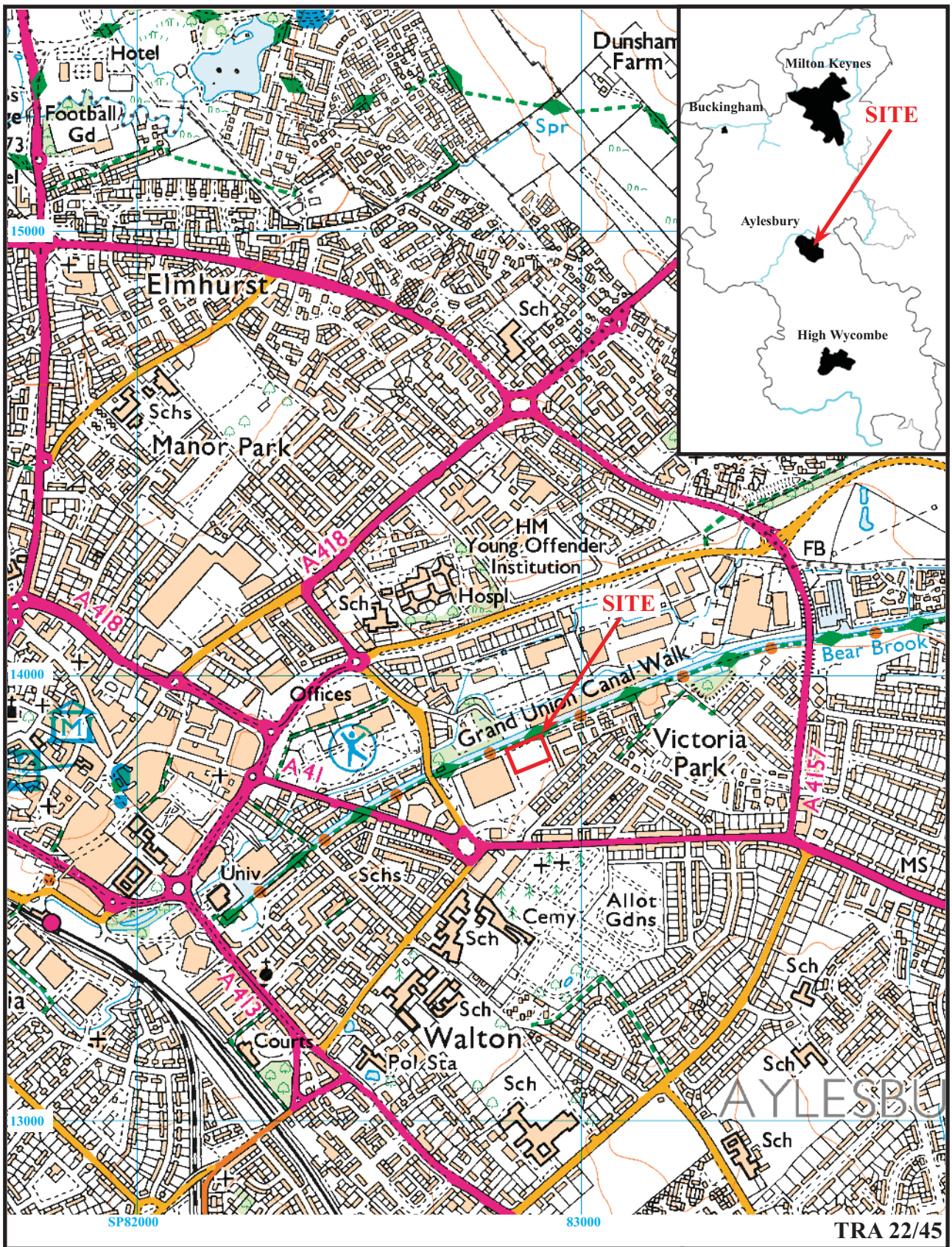

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Figure 1. Location of site within Aylesbury and Buckinghamshire.

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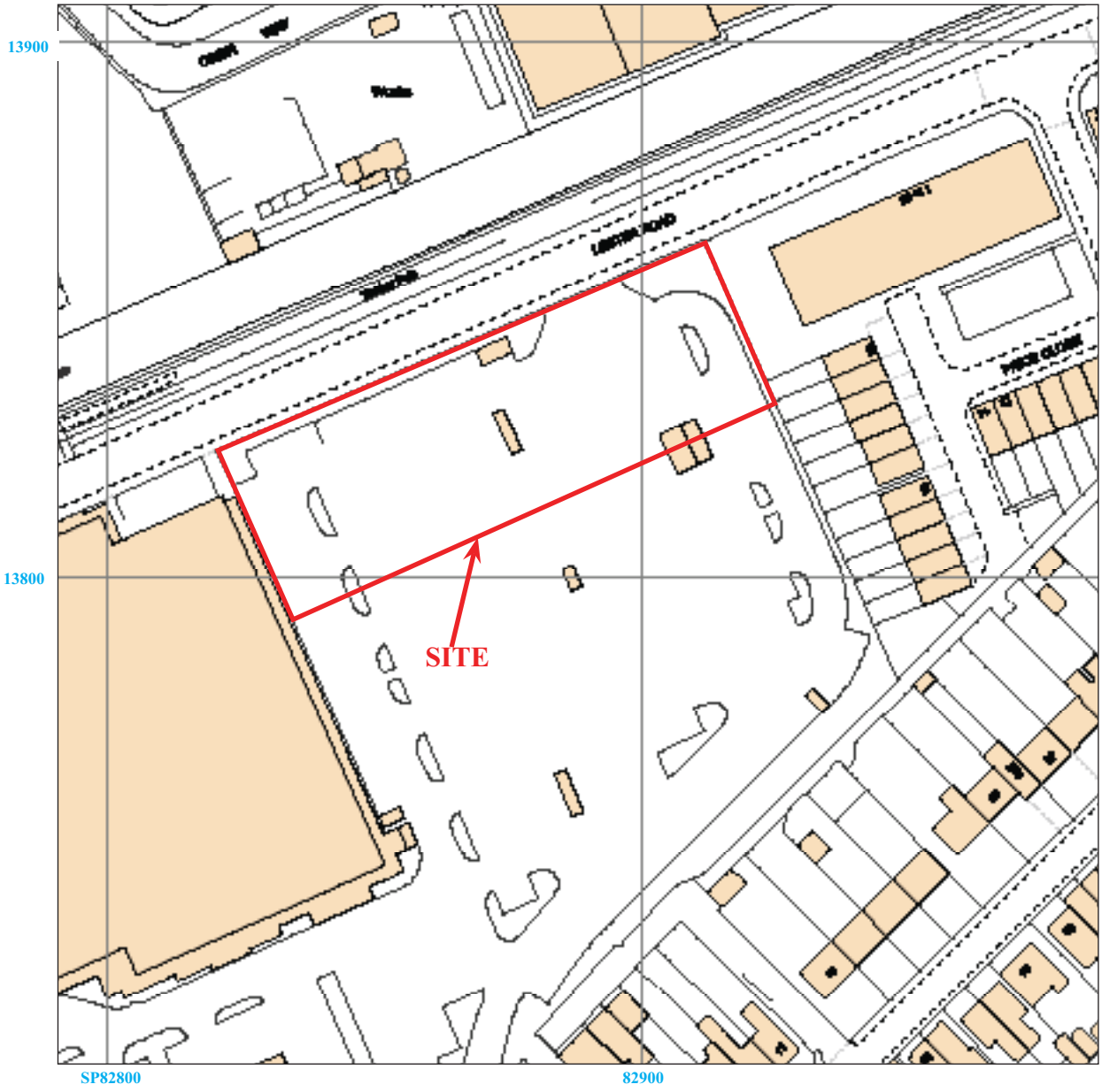

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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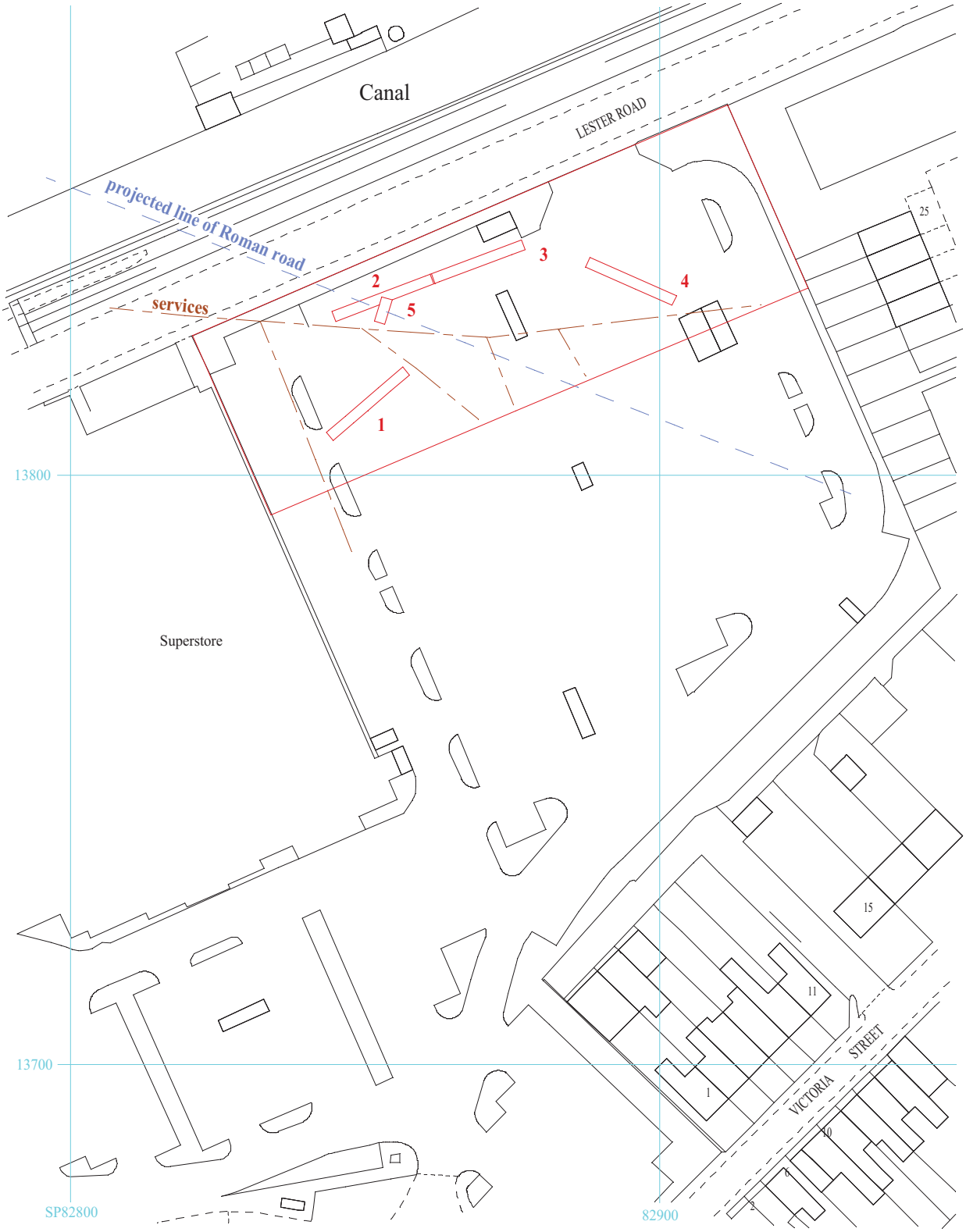

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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

0 50m

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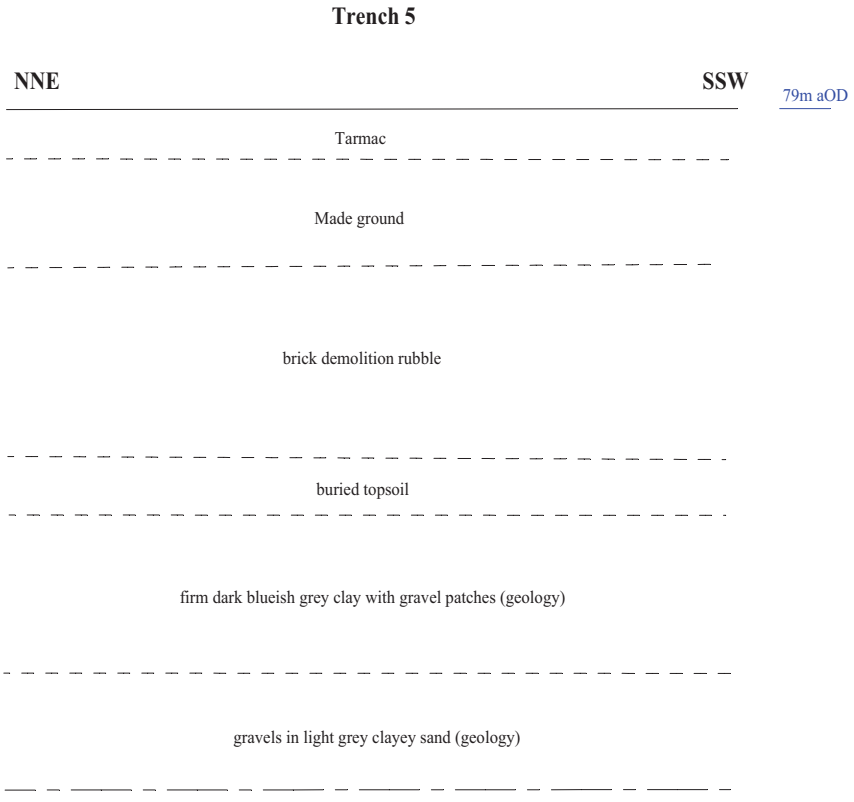

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Figure 4. Representative section.

0 1m

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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking South West, Scales: 2m and 1m.

Plate 2. Trench 1 section, looking North West, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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Land at Tesco car park, Tring Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, 2022
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Plates 1 and 2.

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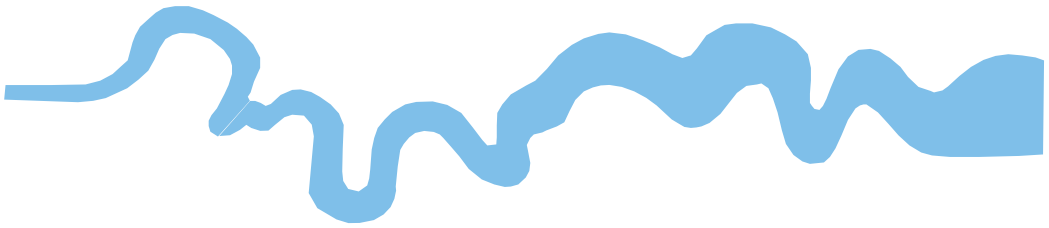
Plate 3. Trench 2/3, looking North East, Scales: 2m and 1m.

Plate 4. Trench 5 section, looking South East, Scales: 2m and 1m.

TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern	AD 1901
Victorian	AD 1837
Post Medieval	AD 1500
Medieval	AD 1066
Saxon	AD 410
Roman	AD 43
	AD 0 BC
Iron Age	750 BC
Bronze Age: Late	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC



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