

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Notcutts Garden Centre, Golden Balls,
Nuneham Courtenay, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

Phase 1

by Maisie Foster

Site Code: NGC21/150

(SU 5583 9777)

Notcutts Garden Centre, Golden Balls, Nuneham Courtenay, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

Phase 1

for Notcutts Ltd

by Maisie Foster

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code NGC 21/150

March 2022

Summary

Site name: Notcutts Garden Centre, Golden Balls, Nuneham Courtenay, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 5583 9777

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation Phase 1

Date and duration of project: 21st February 2022

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Maisie Foster

Site code: NGC 21/150

Summary of results: The evaluation for this phase of site development was successfully carried out with all four trenches dug as intended. A single large feature, perhaps a quarry, with two small sherds of probably Medieval (or later) pottery was uncovered. 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 at Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

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|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Report edited/checked by: | Steve Ford ✓ 11.03.22 |
| | Steve Preston ✓ 11.03.22 |

Notcutts Garden Centre, Golden Balls, Nuneham Courtenay, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation Phase 1

by Maisie Foster

Report 21/150

Introduction

This report documents the results of a first phase of archaeological field evaluation carried out at Notcutts Garden Centre, Golden Balls, Nuneham Courtenay, Oxfordshire, (SU 5583 9777) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Jack Karagoz of DHA Planning, Eclipse House, Eclipse Park, Sittingbourne Rd, Maidstone ME14 3EN on behalf of Notcutts Ltd.

Planning permission (app P18/S1895/FUL) has been granted by South Oxfordshire District Council for the demolition of an existing restaurant, extension of existing buildings, enlarged yard, new car park, landscaping and drainage. The consent is subject to two conditions (12 and 13) relating to archaeology, in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2018) and the District Council's Local Plan Policies on archaeology. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site, a field evaluation by means of machine-dug trenching has been requested in order to assess the site's archaeological potential and allow a mitigation strategy to be designed if appropriate.

The fieldwork was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Steven Weaver, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, the archaeological adviser to the District. The fieldwork was undertaken by Maisie Foster, with assistance from Cat Gregori on 21st February 2022 and the site code is NGC 21/150. The fieldwork was to take place in two phases to accommodate the requirement of the development programme with a second phase report to be presented in due course. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Services in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located just to the south of Nuneham Courtenay, which lies to the south-east of Oxford, Oxfordshire on the junction between the A4074 and Oxford Road (Fig. 1). The overall site is on land rising gently from south to north and the rectangular parcel of land covered by this phase of work is relatively flat at a height of *c.* 75m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), and is bounded by the rear of Notcutts Garden Centre to the south, the A4074 to

the east and open fields and farmland to the north and west. The land is currently an open grassland field, used as an overflow car park by the garden centre. The underlying geology is Gault Formation - Mudstone (BGS 1980). A slight variation between this and a silty sand was located in all trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Steven Weaver of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Weaver 2021). In summary, this potential stems from the location of the site within a zone to the south and east of Oxford which is notable for the large number of pottery and some brick kilns of Roman date collectively known as the Oxford Industry (Young 1977). More specifically the site lies 300m east of nine Roman brick kilns which have been designated a Scheduled Monument. A number of crop marks of unknown date but possibly representing Iron Age into Roman settlement are also recorded to the east of the site with a probable levelled round barrow also visible from the air.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. The specific research aims of this project are:

- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if any Roman deposits are present on the site, specifically related to tile or brick production; and
- to provide information to allow the preparation of a mitigation strategy if necessary.

The trenching was to be undertaken in two phases, this report being concerned with the first phase, in the northern part of the overall development area. In this phase, four trenches were to be dug, using a 360°-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Topsoil and any other overburden were to be removed to expose archaeologically sensitive levels. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools, and sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed would be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims outlined above, without compromising the integrity of any feature that might warrant preservation *in situ* or be better investigated under the conditions pertaining to full excavation. Spoil heaps were to be monitored for finds and scanned with a metal detector.

Results

All four trenches for the first phase were dug as intended (Fig. 3). The trenches ranged from 19.6m to 22m in length and 0.66m to 0.8m in depth and all were 1.6m wide. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The single excavated feature is summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Fig. 3; Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned W - E and was 19.6m long and up to 0.8m deep, though shallower to the east (0.65m). The stratigraphy consisted of 0.52m of topsoil and 0.28m subsoil overlying natural geology (silty sand with gravel patches). A potential feature was investigated and shown to be a tree-throw hole. No finds or features of archaeological interest were observed.

Trench 2 (Fig. 3; Pl. 2)

Trench 2 was aligned SSE - NNW and was 21m long and 0.68m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.45m of topsoil and 0.23m subsoil overlying natural geology. No finds or features of archaeological interest were observed.

Trench 3 (Figs 3 and 4; Pls 3, 5 and 6)

Trench 3 was aligned E - W and was 22m long and 0.56m deep. A test pit was excavated at the west end of the trench to a total depth of 0.98m to confirm the interpretation of the geology. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.34m of topsoil and 0.22m subsoil at the east end and 0.41m of topsoil and 0.57m of subsoil overlying natural geology at the west end. Occupying approximately 10m of the west end of the trench, a feature was exposed and a 1.4m wide slot [1] excavated across it. The feature extended the full width of the trench, with a steep-sided cut to a flat base, and was 0.56m deep and filled with a mid greyish brown silty sand (50). Two very small sherds of pottery were recovered from this fill, one medieval and one of uncertain date.

Trench 4 (Fig. 3; Pl. 4)

Trench 4 was aligned NE - SW and was 22m long and 0.66m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.42m of topsoil and 0.24m subsoil overlying natural geology. No finds or features of archaeological interest were observed.

Finds

Pottery by Sue Anderson

Two sherds of pottery weighing 5g were collected from feature 1, fill 50. Fabric codes were assigned from the Oxfordshire fabric series (Mellor 1994), or are based on the period and main inclusions.

One sherd was a tiny fragment of a very fine sandy redware which was in a soft fabric and had lost its original surfaces. It is possible that it is a rim fragment, but the date is uncertain, the most likely being Roman or late/post-medieval.

A body sherd in a harder fine sandy redware fabric has a thin yellowish glaze with green speckles externally. The fabric is similar to Combe (fabric CO) products from West Oxfordshire, but redwares of this type were made at many production sites across the region. It could also be a late medieval Brill/Boarstall product.

Conclusion

This small evaluation has revealed a single deposit of potential archaeological interest, of medieval or later date. The form of the feature is uncertain, it could be a quarry or some form of landscaping. Dating evidence was provided by two very small sherds of rather undiagnostic but probably late medieval pottery, which could easily be redeposited in a later feature. There is nothing that would connect these with the Roman kilns nearby. No other finds or features of archaeological interest were encountered.

References

- BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet **254**, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Mellor, M, 1994, 'A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region', *Oxoniensia*, **59**, 17–217
- NPPF, 2018, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Government, London
- Weaver, S, 2021, 'Land at Notcutts Oxford Garden Centre, Nuneham Courtenay: Design Brief for Evaluation and a Staged Mitigation', Oxford County council, Oxford
- Young, C J, 1977, *The Roman Pottery Industry of the Oxford Region*, BAR Brit Ser **43**, Oxford

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at W, SSE, E, NE end

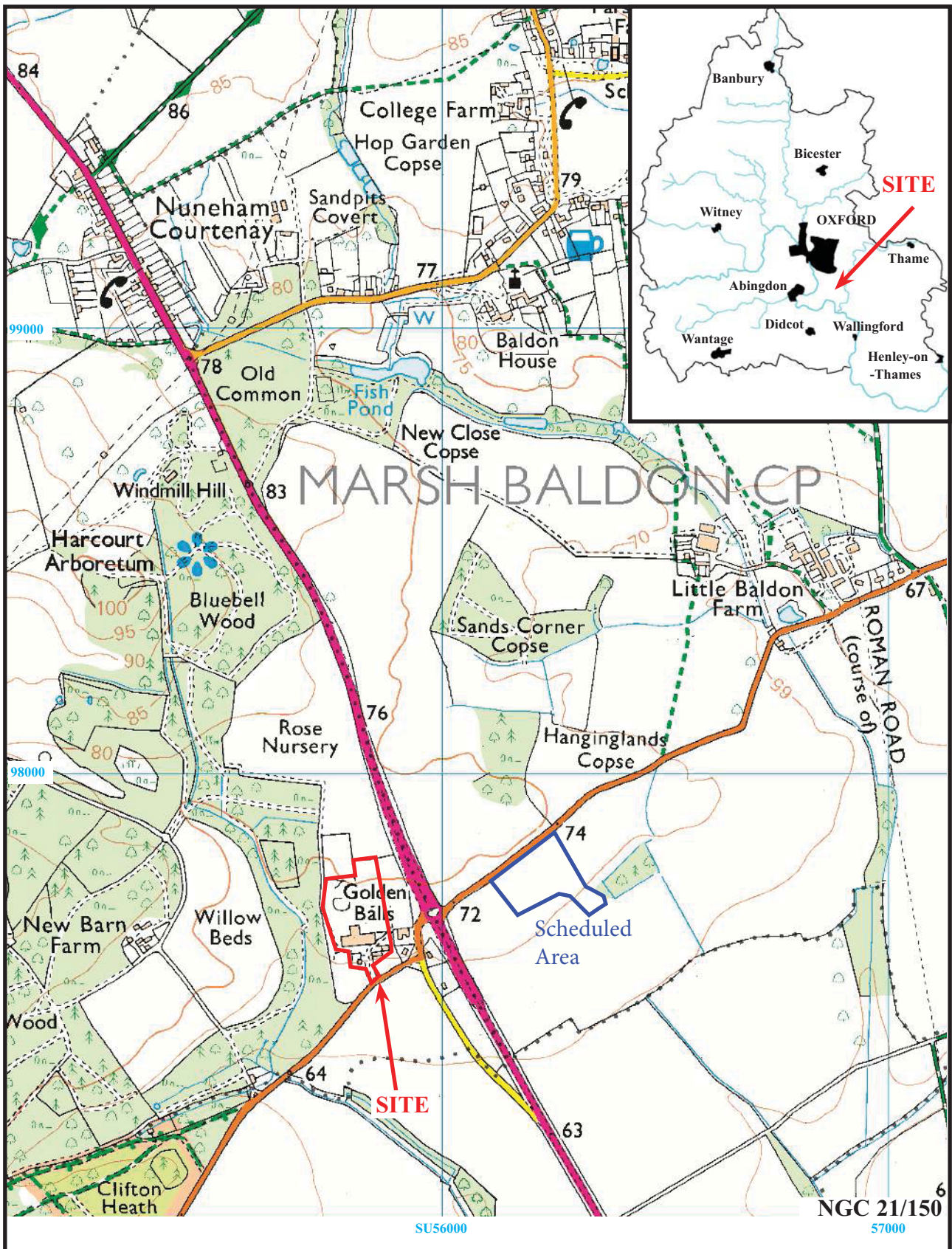
| <i>Trench</i> | <i>Length (m)</i> | <i>Breadth (m)</i> | <i>Depth (m)</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|---|
| 1 | 19.6 | 1.6 | 0.8 | 0-0.52m Topsoil; 0.52-0.8m Subsoil (mid red brown silty sand); 0.8m+ Natural geology (silty sand with gravel patches) [Pl. 1] |
| 2 | 21 | 1.6 | 0.68 | 0-0.45m Topsoil; 0.45-0.68m Subsoil; 0.68m+ Natural geology (silty sand with gravel patches) [Pl. 2] |
| 3 | 22 | 1.6 | 0.56 | 0-0.34m Topsoil; 0.34-0.56m Subsoil; 0.56m+ Natural geology (silty sand with gravel patches) Test pit 0.98m deep. Cut feature 1 [Pls 3, 5 and 6] |
| 4 | 22 | 1.6 | 0.66 | 0-0.42m Topsoil; 0.42-0.66m Subsoil; 0.66m+ Natural geology (silty sand with gravel patches) [Pl. 4] |

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

| <i>Trench</i> | <i>Cut</i> | <i>Fill (s)</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>Dating evidence</i> |
|---------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 3 | 1 | 50 | Cut Feature | Medieval or later | Pottery |

APPENDIX 3: Catalogue of pottery

| <i>Cut</i> | <i>Context</i> | <i>Fabric</i> | <i>No</i> | <i>Wt</i> <i>(g)</i> | <i>Notes</i> | <i>Spot date</i> |
|------------|----------------|---------------|-----------|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 | 50 | CO? | 1 | 4 | hard sandy pale red | Late 14th-16th century |
| 1 | 50 | UNID | 1 | 1 | soft very fine sandy orange, very abraded, no surfaces, possible rim? | Roman or Late/Post-Medieval |

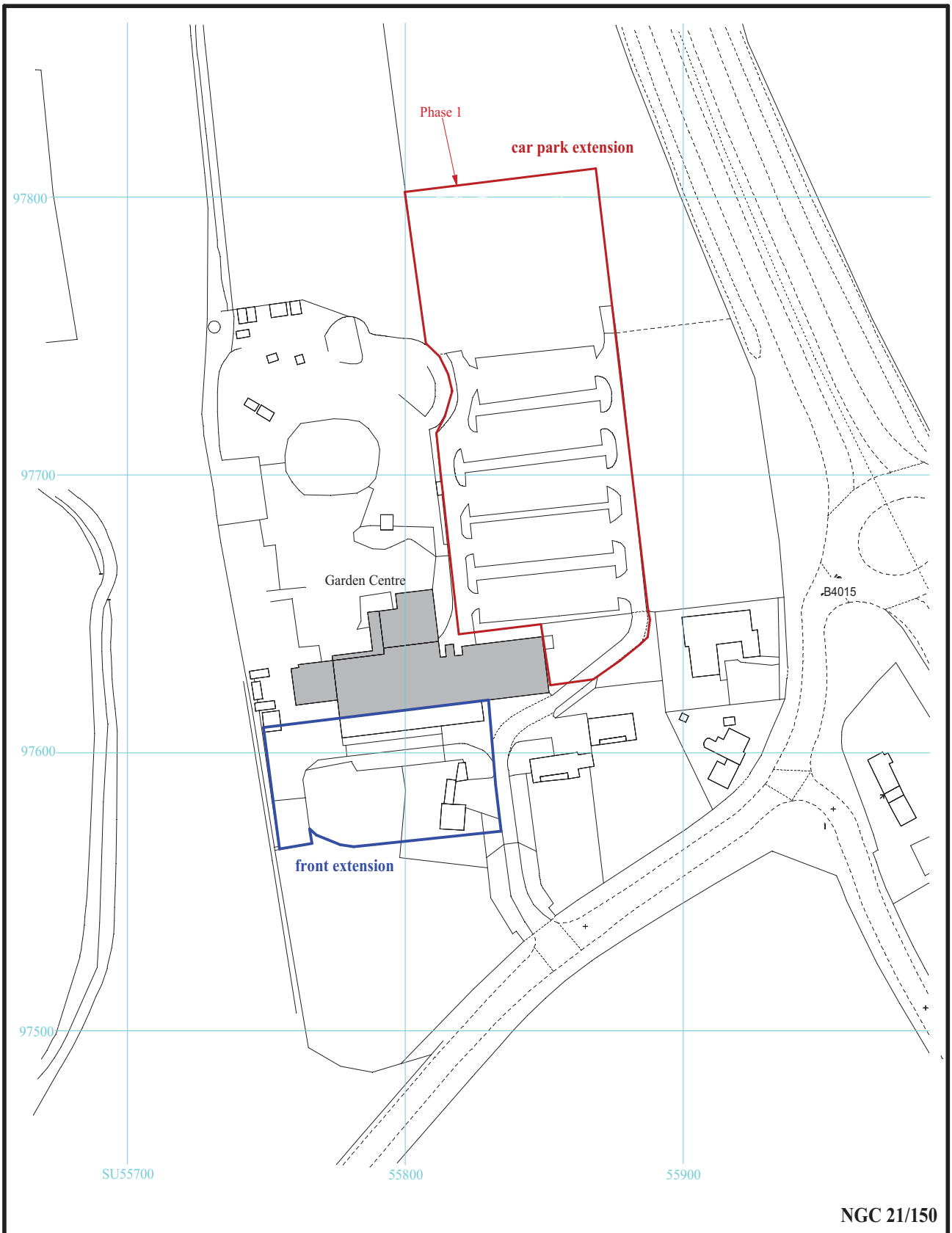


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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Nuneham Courtenay and within Oxfordshire.

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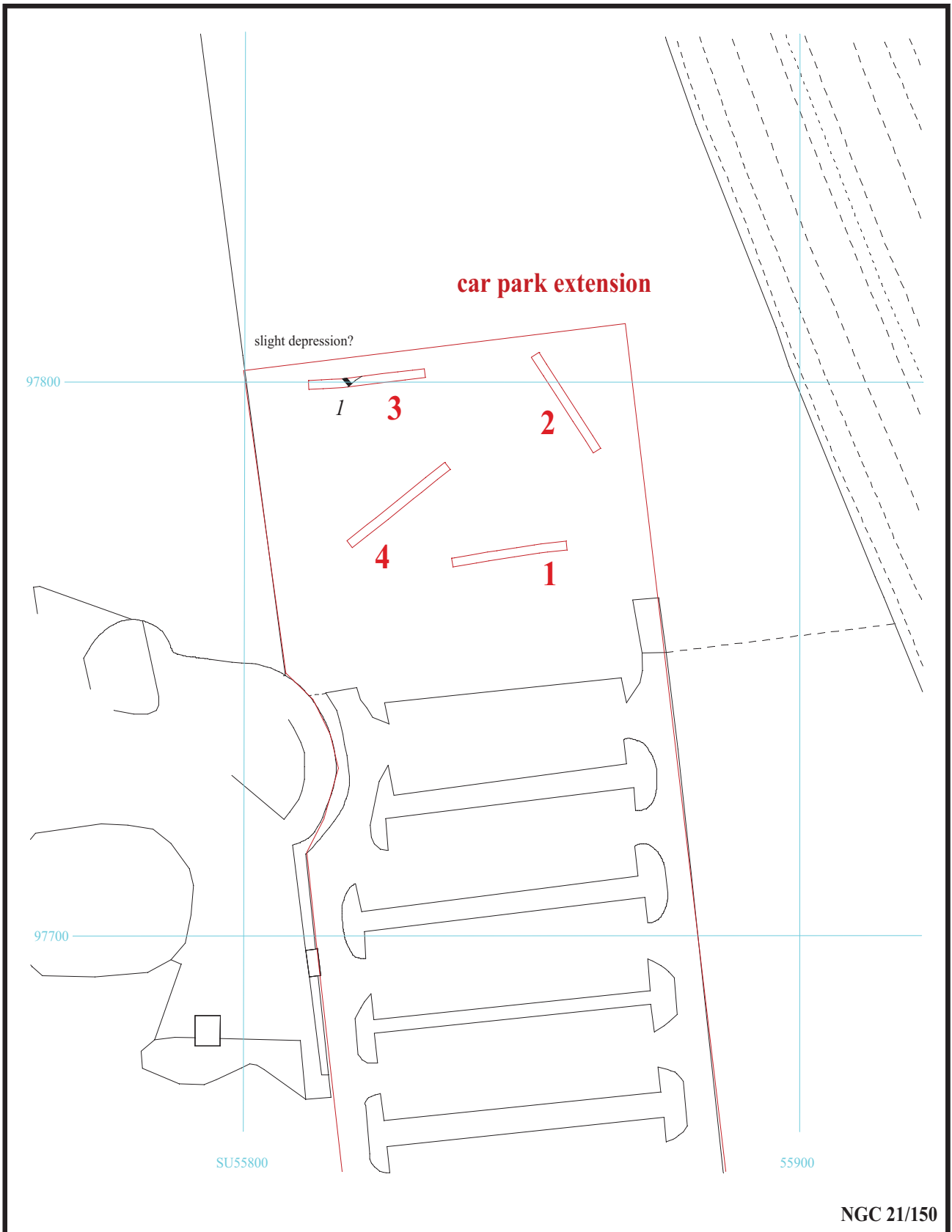
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.



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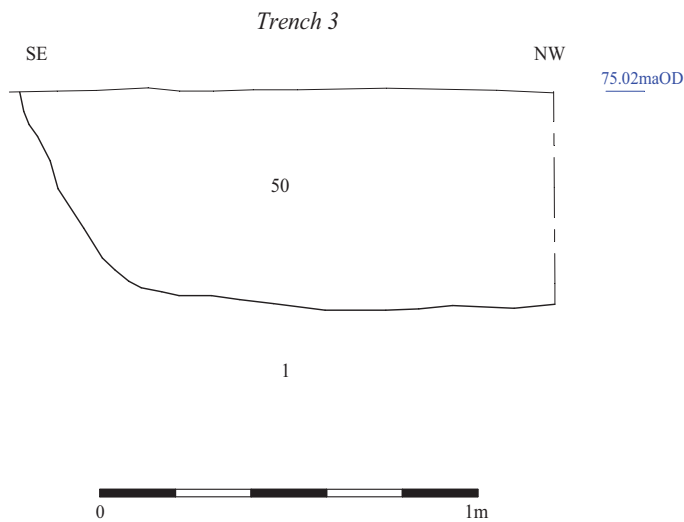
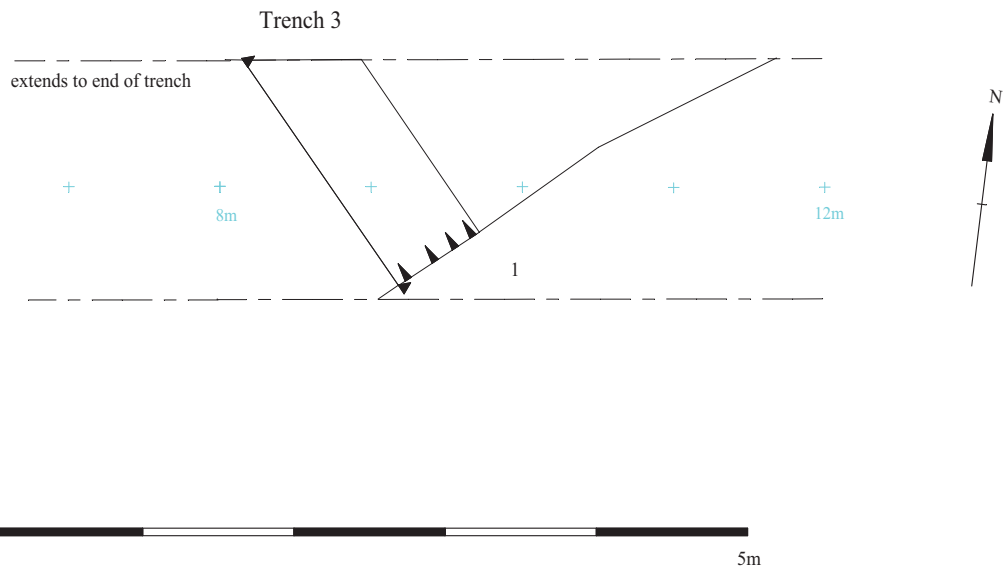
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Figure 3. Location of feature in Trench 3.



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Figure 4. Detail of Trench 3.

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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking East, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking North North West, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Trench 3, looking West, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 4, looking South South West, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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Plates 3 and 4.**

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Plate 5. Trench 3, test pit at West end, looking south. Scales: horizontal 2m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 6. Trench 3, feature 1, looking West, Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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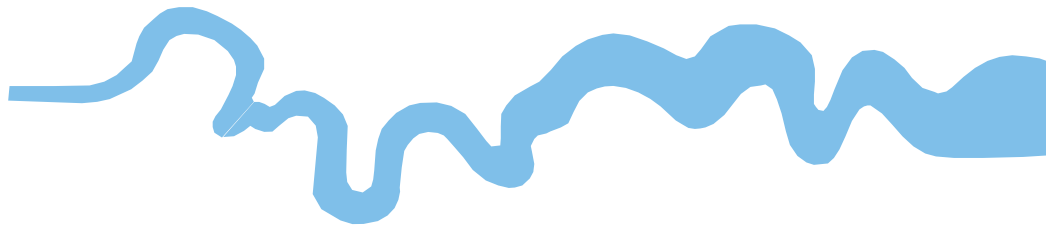
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Plates 3 and 4.**

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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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