

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land to the rear of Priory Cottage,
22 Church Street, Wantage, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Aiji Castle and James Lewis

Site Code: PCW10/101

(SU 3968 8779)

**Land to the rear of Priory Cottage
22 Church Street, Wantage, Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Bower Mapson Limited

by Aiji Castle and James Lewis

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

SiteCodePCW10/101

November 2011

Summary

Site name: Land to the rear of Priory Cottage, 22 Church Street, Wantage, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 3968 8779

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 26th September – 27th October 2011

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Tim Dawson

Site code: PCW 10/101

Area of site: 0.21ha

Summary of results: One pit and a well of post-medieval date were recorded.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 08.11.11 Steve Preston ✓ 08.11.11

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Report 10/101

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at land to the rear of Priory Cottage, 22 Church Street, Wantage, Oxfordshire (SU 3968 8779) (Fig. 1) prior to the construction of two new houses. The work was commissioned by Mr Peter Mapson, of Bower Mapson Limited, Willow House, 7 The Avenue, Stanton Fitzwarren, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN6 7SE.

Outline and detailed planning consent (WAN 19717/1-X and WAN 19717/2-D) has been granted by the Vale of White Horse District Council to construct two detached houses to the rear of Priory Cottage, 22 Church Street, Wantage. The archaeological potential of the site was highlighted in a brief prepared by Mr Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Coddington 2011). The development site is located close to the historic medieval core of Wantage and due to the possibility of damage to potential archaeological deposits the consent was subject to a condition (6) relating to archaeology. This required an archaeological watching brief to be carried out during groundworks and is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010), and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Hugh Coddington. The fieldwork took place between 26th September and 27th October 2011, and was undertaken by James Lewis, Tim Dawson, David Platt and Aiji Castle. The site code is PCW 10/101.

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

Location, topography and geology

The development site is located off Priory Road, just south of Wantage town centre (Fig. 1). The site is bounded on its west side by residential housing and gardens to the east and south east lies the Wantage Church of England Infants School and Comprehensive School (Fig. 2). The Letcombe Brook flows just to the west of the site. The church stands 100m to the north and the site itself has previously been the garden for Priory Cottage. The site lies at an elevation of approximately 93m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is mapped as Upper Greensand (BGS 1971). Chalk was found above the greensand in places in the trenches observed here.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the area has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Coddington 2010). The site lies beyond what is thought to be south-west margins of the historic (medieval) core of Wantage (Foster *et al.* 1975, map 2) but within an area which has recorded finds of Roman and medieval pottery. The town has Saxon origins, but the topography of the Saxon town is not well known. Recent excavations to the south-east of the town centre have revealed some Saxon deposits suggesting a focus of the town might lie in that direction (Lewis 2010). The same excavations also extended the known area of medieval settlement and found a Bronze Age cremation cemetery.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the intrusive groundworks for the new houses and garages. This involved the monitoring of foundations and service trenches which were dug by both mini-digger and 360° JCB type digger. Any archaeological deposits were to be recorded but no further action was to take place unless threatened by further groundworks. The topsoil had been removed from the entire extent of the site prior to trenching.

Results (Figs 3 and 4)

Pipe Trench

The pipe trench lay at the north-west corner of the site and was dug to accommodate services. It measured 16m long, 0.5m wide and 0.6m deep. The stratigraphy consisted entirely of 19th- or 20th-century made ground and at no point was the natural geology encountered. No archaeological deposits were observed.

House Plot 1

The foundations for plot 1 were dug at the south end of the site to a depth of 1.55m and widths of 0.5m and 0.7m for internal and external walls respectively. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.3m of subsoil which overlay degraded natural chalk, 0.2m thick. Below this was the natural greensand observed to a depth of 1.55m. A brick-lined trough was discovered on the eastern footing which contained modern rubbish including metal buckets, glass, tar blocks and modern pottery. No other features were observed.

Garage 1

The trenches for this garage were 0.6m wide and a depth of 1.5m. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.32m thick of subsoil which overlay natural chalk and greensand. No archaeological features were observed.

House Plot 2

Footings for plot 2 were dug to the same widths as house plot 1 although to a shallower depth of 1.48m (Pl. 1). The stratigraphy also mirrors that of plot 1 although the subsoil, 0.3m thick, contained a higher proportion of modern refuse such as glass and china and ceramic building material. A small animal burial was found in the central footings but the presence of modern china and glass suggests this was not of archaeological significance.

Garage 2

The foundations were dug to a depth of 0.67m and widths of 0.8m and 0.5m. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.3m of disturbed subsoil under which lay natural chalk. A post-medieval well was identified in the south-east corner of the works. This consisted of two courses of red bricks overlying six courses of roughly hewn chalk blocks, down to a depth of 0.7m. Below this the shaft was lined with clay to a depth of 6m and there was no evidence of any shoring. A wooden post was observed in the water at the base of the well.

Garage 3

Foundations were dug to the same dimensions as garage 2 and natural chalk was reached at a depth of 0.45m under subsoil. A single pit (1) 1.6m wide 1m deep was identified in section at the north-east end of the footings and recorded. It contained two silty clay fills, the lower (53) was dark brown and the upper (52) was light brown (Fig. 4, Pl. 2). The upper fill contained animal bone and post-medieval pottery.

Finds

A single piece of pottery from fill 52 of pit 1 can be dated to the post-medieval period, and a single small fragment of animal bone could not be more specifically identified.

Conclusion

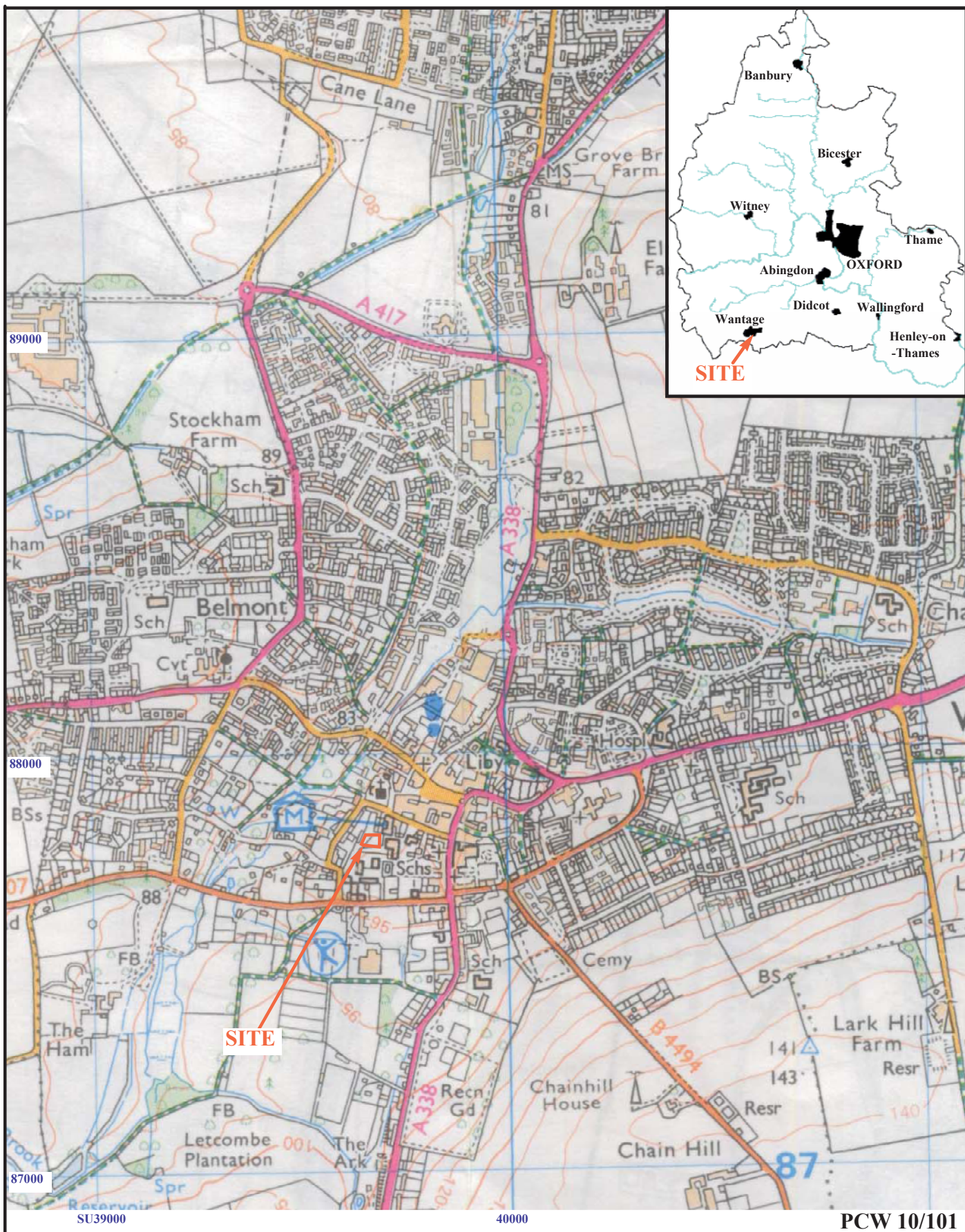
The watching brief carried out at Priory Cottage revealed no evidence for any archaeological deposits preceding the post-medieval period. A single pit and a well were recorded from the post-medieval period. The lack of any features or finds dating to any earlier period especially the medieval period might indicate that this area had witnessed very little activity compared to other areas of Wantage notably at St Mary's School (Lewis 2010). This suggests that the locus of medieval activity may have been further west and closer to the church.

References

- BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 253, Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Coddington, H, 2010, 'Land to the rear of Priory Cottage, Wantage, Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief', Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services, Oxford
- Foster, R, Rodwell, K, Squires, R and Turner, H, 1975, 'Wantage', in K Rodwell (ed), *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire*, Oxford Archaeol Unit Survey 3, Oxford, 163-9
- Lewis, J, 2010, 'St Mary's School, Wantage, Oxfordshire, Post-Excavation Assessment', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl report 07/70, Reading
- PPS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, The Stationery Office, Norwich

APPENDIX 1: Catalogue of all excavated features

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	52,53	pit	Post Medieval	pottery



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Figure 1. Location of site within Wantage and Oxfordshire.

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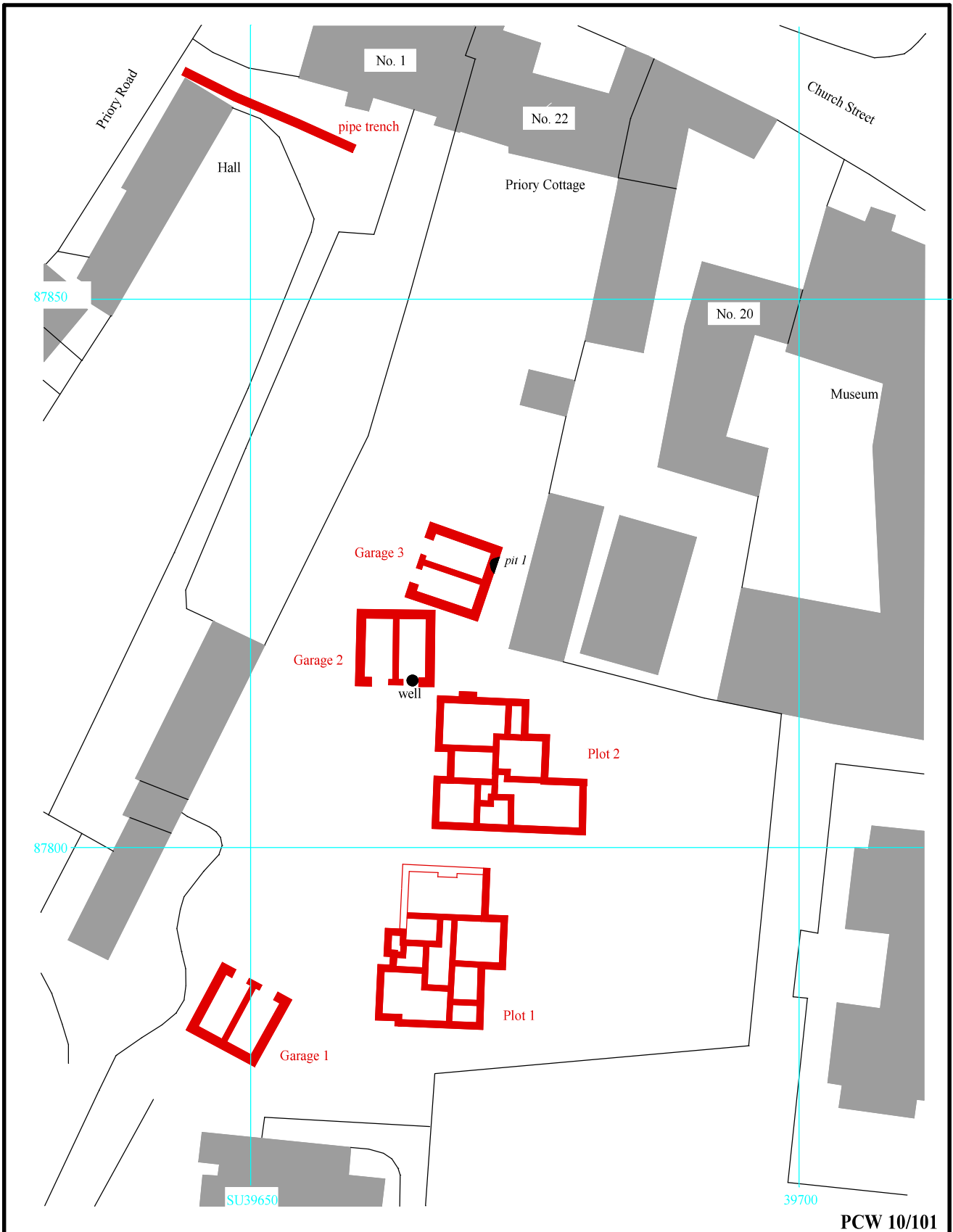


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Church Street.

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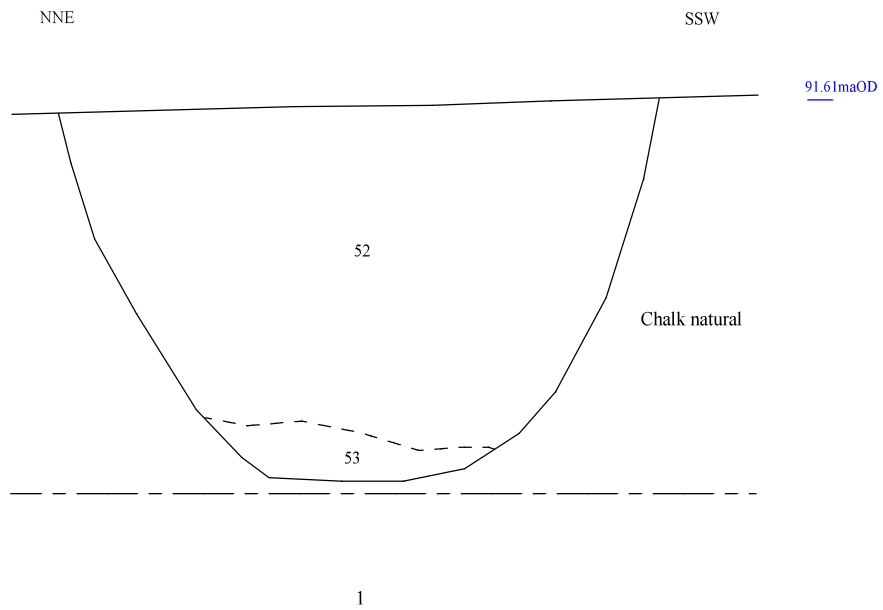
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Figure 3. Locations of areas observed.





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Figure 4. Section.





Plate 1. House footing 2, looking west, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Garage footing 3, pit 1, looking east, scale 1m.

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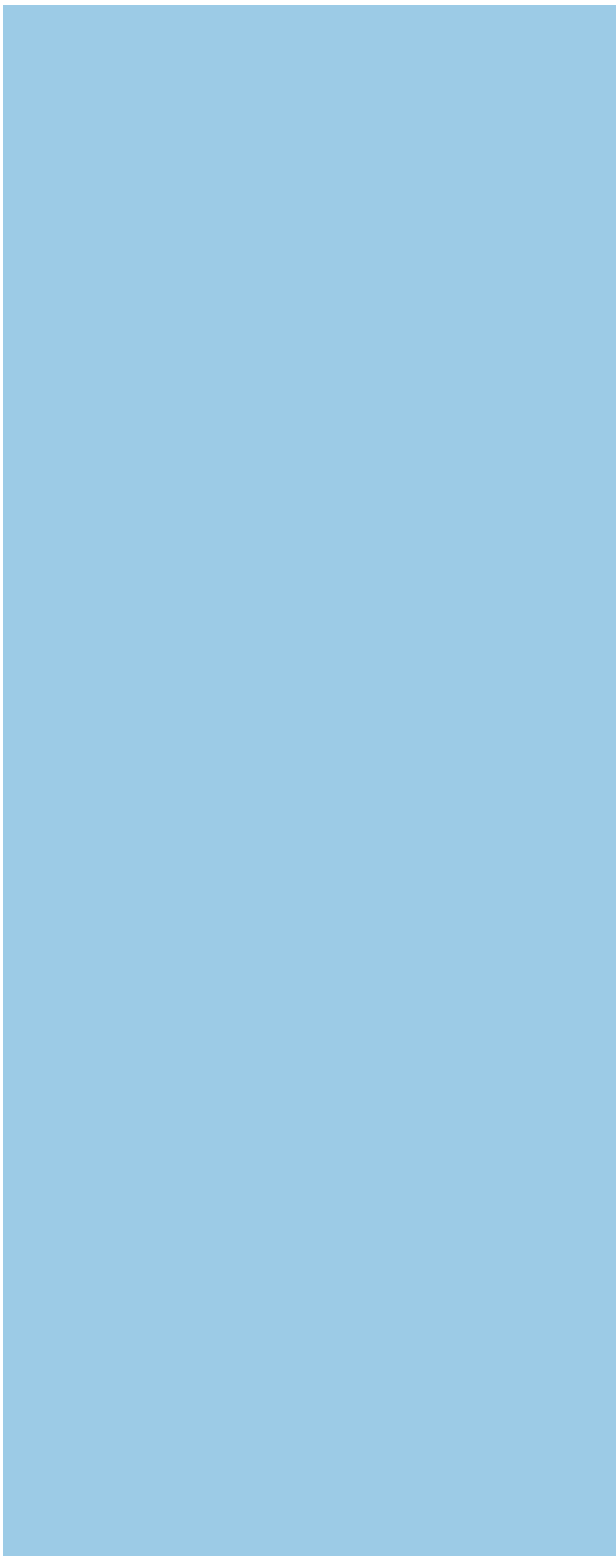
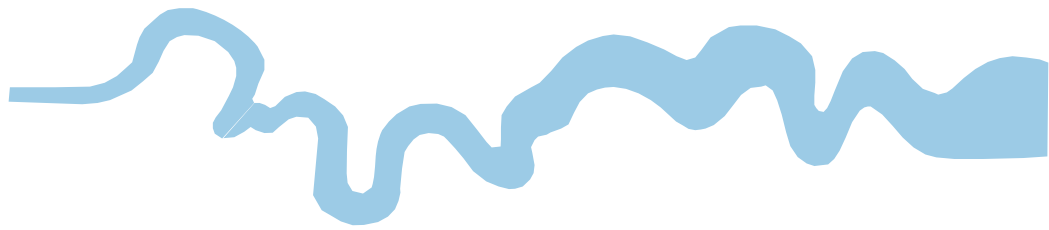
Land to the rear of Priory Cottage, 22 Church Street,
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Plates 1 and 2.

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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
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 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





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,
47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading,
Berkshire, RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552
Fax: 0118 9260553
Email: tvas@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk**