

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**New Community Hall, All Saints Church,
Lydalls Road, Didcot, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Mundin and Susan Porter

Site Code: LRD11/79

(SU5195 9055)

**New Community Hall, All Saints Church,
Lydalls Road, Didcot, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
For All Saints Parish Church Council**

by AndrewMundinandSusanPorter
ThamesValleyArchaeologicalServices
Ltd

SiteCodeLRD11/79

January 2012

Summary

Site name: New Community Hall, All Saints Church, Lydalls Road, Didcot, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU5195 9055

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 13th September 2011 to 20th January 2012

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Munding, David Platt, Susan Porter

Site code: LRD 11/79

Summary of results: The footings for the new hall were observed during and after excavation. Layers of Victorian and modern made ground were identified. Trenches for a rainwater storage tank and soakaway pit were observed in the car park area. No material of archaeological interest was uncovered.

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 21.01.12
	Steve Preston ✓ 21.01.12

New Community Hall, All Saints Church, Lydalls Road, Didcot, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin and Susan Porter

Report 11/79

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out to the rear of All Saints Church, Lydalls Road, Didcot, Oxfordshire (SU5195 9055) (Fig. 1) for the construction of a new Youth and Community Hall to replace the old parish hall. The work was commissioned by Mr Stephen Simkins, of Westwaddy ADP, 60 East Saint Helens Street, Abingdon, OX14 5EB, on behalf of the All Saints PCC, 140 Lydalls Road, Didcot, OX11 7EA.

Planning permission (P08/W1259) has been granted by South Oxfordshire District Council for the demolition of the old hall and the construction of a replacement, with associated car park. This consent is subject to a condition relating to archaeology which requires a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, and based on a brief prepared by him (Oram 2011). The fieldwork took place between 13th September 2011 and 20th January 2012, and was undertaken by Andrew Muddin, David Platt and Susan Porter. The site code is LRD 11/79.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the western side of modern Didcot, which has grown rapidly over the recent decades (Fig. 1). All Saints Church, thought to have medieval origins, is immediately to the south-west, with its graveyard directly adjacent to the site's eastern side (Fig. 2). Access is gained to the site via a short cul-de-sac off Roman Place which links to Foxhall Road. A playground bounds the site to the north. The geology of the site is mapped as Upper Greensand (BGS 1971): a grey calcareous silty clay was noted at the base of trenching to a maximum depth of 1.9m. The site is at an elevation of *c.*70m above Ordnance Datum sloping upwards slightly from east to west.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Oram 2011). In summary, the site is located within 50m of All Saints Church, giving rise to a potential for 12th-century or later deposits to be uncovered during the works. An excavation by the Didcot and District Historical and Archaeological Society between 1978 and 1982, directly west of the church, uncovered early Iron Age settlement remains, with further occupation through the late Iron Age, Roman and Saxon periods. This which followed by the construction of the Parish Church and the Manor of Didcot, probably founded in the 12th century (Oram 2011). The medieval part of Didcot is generally thought to be centred on All Saints Church. It is noted that the 'Old Rectory' still exists at No. 74 Foxhall Road. A pre-Victorian rectory's foundations were also noted during the previous excavations.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This involved examination of extensive intrusive groundworks for the new hall's foundation trenches and construction of a new soakaway and rainwater collection tank within the new car park.

Results

New hall footings

The foundation trenching for the new hall was observed (Fig. 3). The stratigraphy generally over the site comprised layers of made ground. Some variation in the depth of the new foundation trenching occurred due to tree root action and soft structural conditions of the underlying greensand in the east. The easternmost trench was 1.9m deep and 0.8m wide, widening to 1.2m at the northern end. Otherwise the trenching was generally 1.2m deep and 0.8m wide.

The layers of made ground, raising this site above the level of that of the adjacent graveyard, comprised a grey rooty clayey silt overburden (50) to a depth of 0.45m. A 20th-century coin was recovered from this layer. Beneath this, to a depth of 0.65m, was a dark grey clay made ground (51), which seemed to be Victorian in date based on very occasional tile and white 'china' finds (three sherds of each). Below this was a brown-grey clayey, silty sand (52), to a depth of 1.05m. At this depth natural Greensand was encountered, which here took the form of a whitish grey silty clay. In the western parts of the footing, the top of the natural geology was noted at 0.9m, with the upper overburden reaching a depth of 0.3m. No finds were recovered from this particular observation.

No cut features were disturbed by the trenching other than a ceramic pipe and brick-filled soakaway, noted in the south facing section of the north footing.

Car park trenching and levelling

Within the area of the new car park, trenches were excavated to a depth of 3m for the provision of a new soakaway and rain water collection tank along the northern edge of the site (Fig. 3). The stratigraphy (Fig. 4) comprised 0.15m of overburden over 0.05m of orange clay, with cement and stone inclusions; below this was 0.10m dark grey brown silty clay, overlying 0.09m mid brown yellow silty sand. Below this the stratigraphy was as in the footings trenches: 0.11m grey rooty clayey silt and 1m of grey brown silty clay made ground over natural greensand at a depth of 1.5m. Both soakaway and rain water tank trench were excavated to an overall depth of 3m. No archaeology was encountered. Service trenches at a proposed depth of only 0.9m were not observed in this area as, due to the depth of the overburden, the trenches were too shallow to reach the archaeologically relevant levels.

Finds

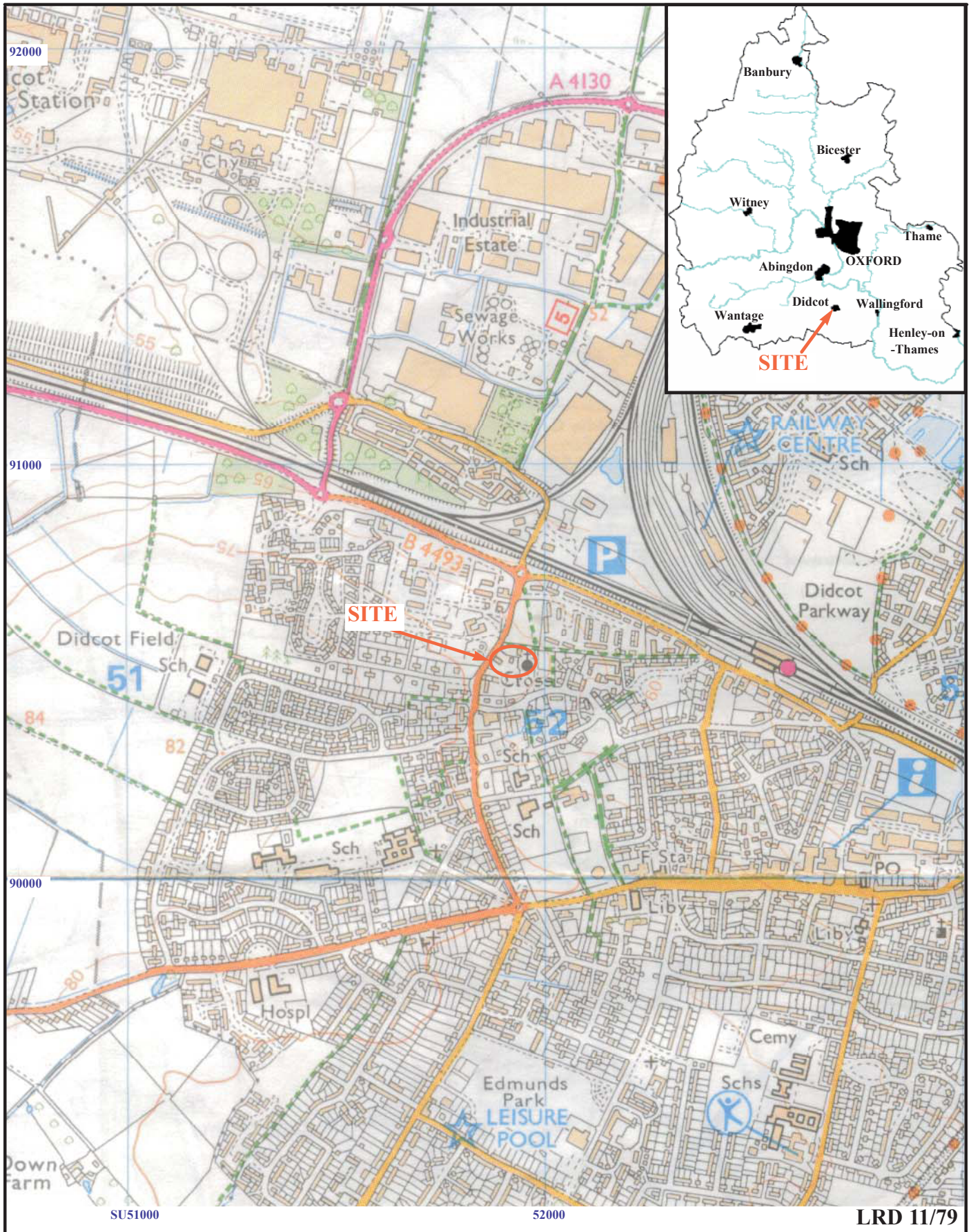
A 1967 two-shilling coin was noted from layer 50. Of other note, part of a gravestone, uncovered by the contractor during hedge cutting at the edge of the site, bore the legend *A.D.*, but no date was evident. The ‘Gothick’ script style seems to be of 19th-century date, probably that of a poor grave marker placed at the edge of the graveyard. Otherwise, three non-descript white china fragments and three tile fragments were noted, but not retained from the foundation trenching.

Conclusion

No prehistoric, Roman or medieval remains were uncovered from the groundworks. Extensive dumping of made ground seems to have occurred to raise the ground level above the adjacent graveyard during the 19th and early 20th century, but this has not buried any archaeological remains.

References

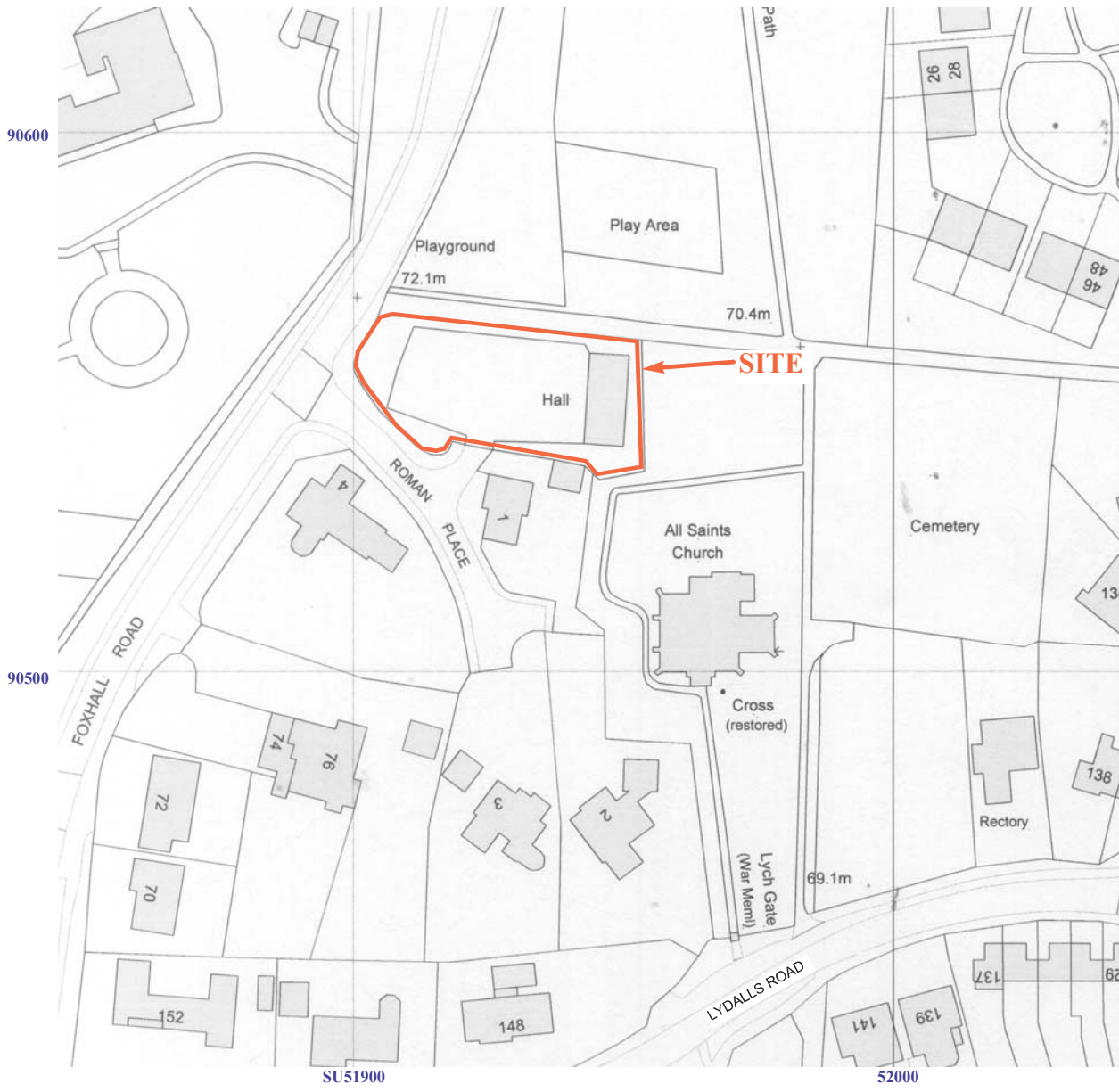
- BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 253, Drift Edition, Keyworth
Oram, R, 2011, ‘All Saints Church, Lydalls Road, Didcot, Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief’,
Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services, Oxford
PPS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, The Stationery Office, Norwich



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Figure 1. Location of site within Didcot and Oxfordshire.

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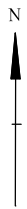
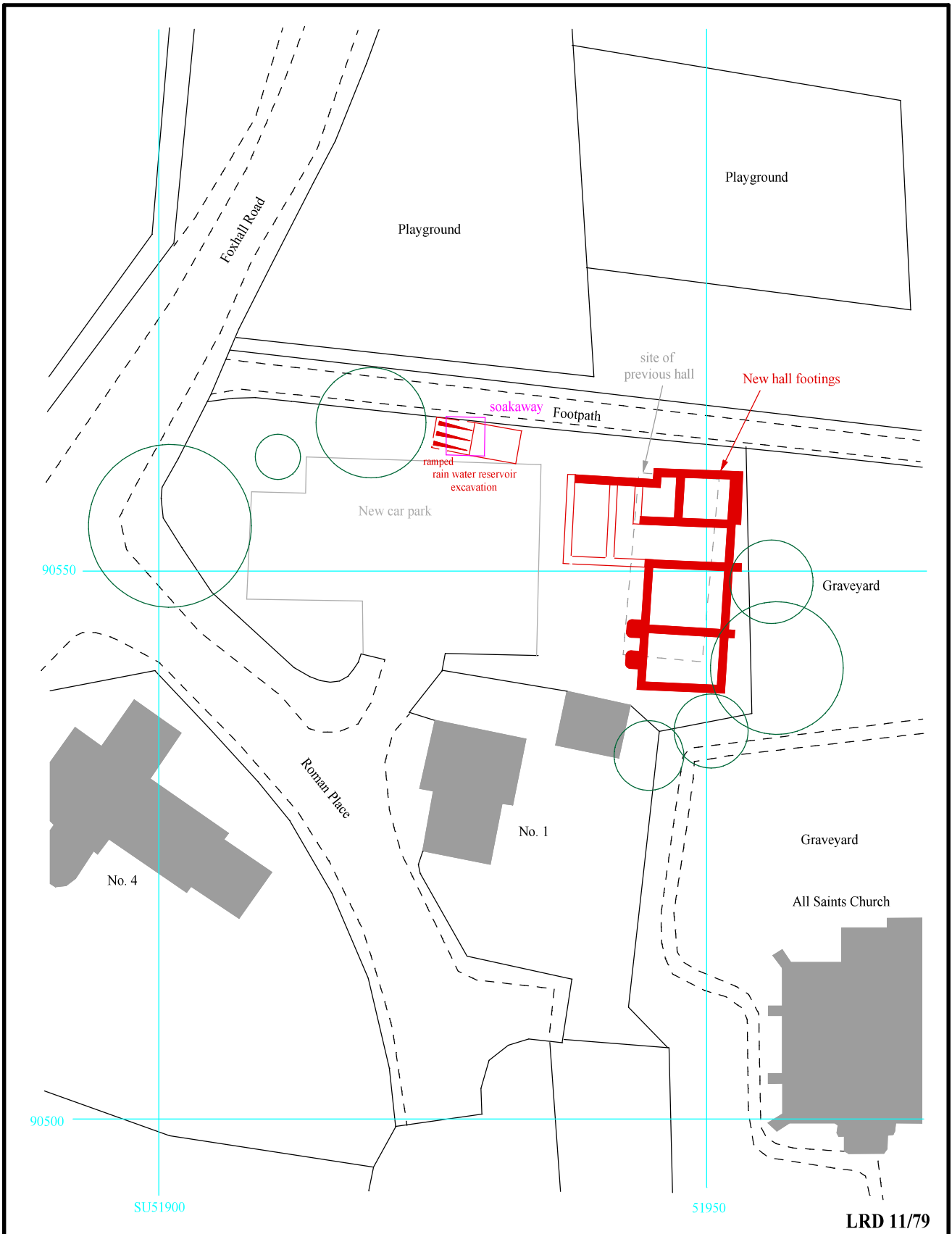


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Lydalls Road.

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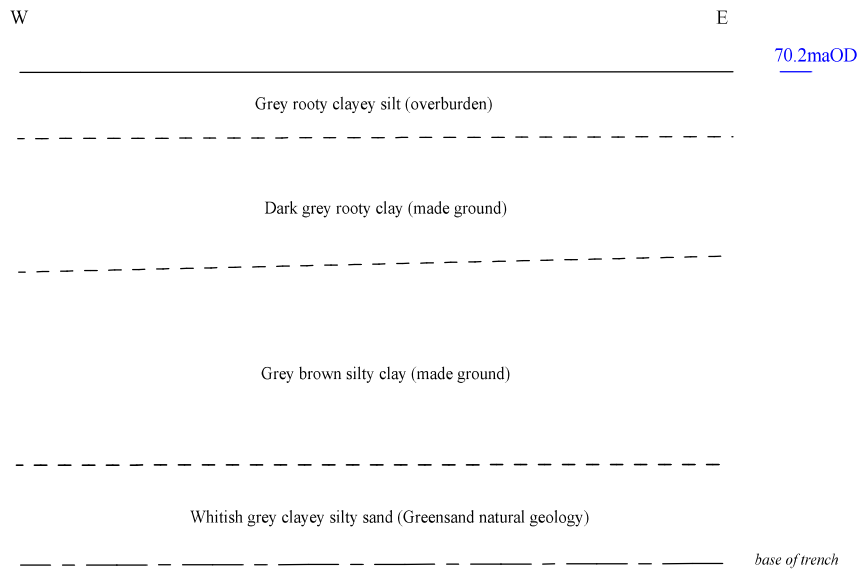


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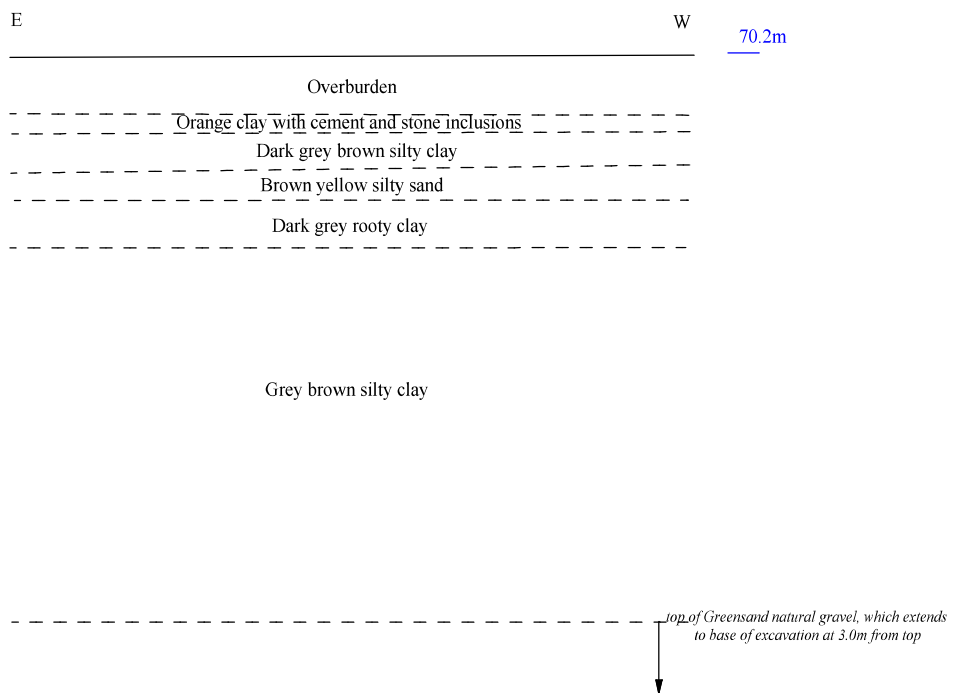
Figure 3. Location of observed areas on site.



Footings



Rain water reservoir



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Figure 4. Representative sections.



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Plate 1. General shot over new footings.



Plate 2. Rain water reservoir section (1.9m deep, not yet fully excavated), looking south, Scales: 2m and 1m.

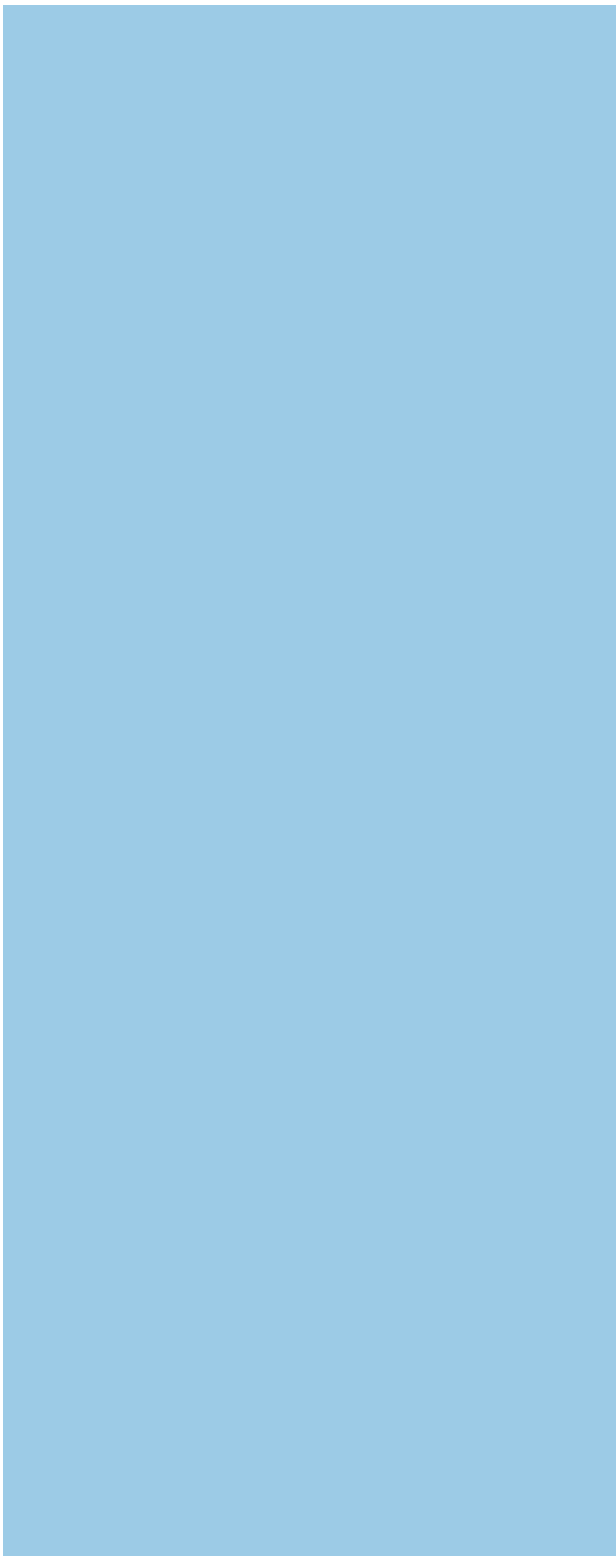
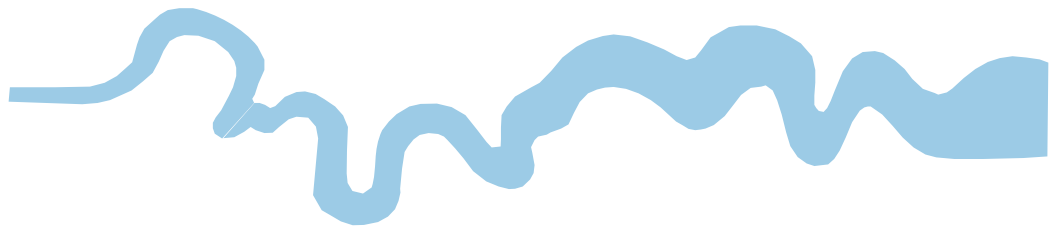
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Plates 1 and 2.

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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
↓	↓



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