

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land at Middle Cottage, Stanford Dingley,
West Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Steve Ford and Andrew Munding

Site Code: MSD12/61

(SU 5771 7157)

**Land at Middle Cottage,
Stanford Dingley, West Berkshire**

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Mr and Mrs J Francis

by Steve Ford and Andrew Mordin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MSD 12/61

May 2012

Summary

Site name: Land at Middle Cottage, Stanford Dingley, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 5771 7157

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 9th May 2012

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: MSD 12/61

Area of site: c. 780 sq m

Summary of results: Three trenches were dug. The foundations of 19th-century buildings were observed. A thick deposit of peat in the trench closest to the river is likely to represent an old channel of the Pang.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Preston✓ 15.05.12

Land at Middle Cottage, Stanford Dingley, West Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Steve Ford and Andrew Mundin

Report 12/61

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land adjacent to Middle Cottage, Stanford Dingley, West Berkshire (SU 5771 7157) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Annika Hatchwell, of Inspiration Chartered Architects, 78 Bartholomew Street, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 7AB on behalf of their clients, Mr J and Mrs C Francis, 106 Barkham Ride, Finchampstead, Berkshire, RG40 4EN.

Planning consent (app no 09/01184/FULD) has been sought from West Berkshire Council for the construction of a new house and garage on the site. Due to the high archaeological potential at this site, an archaeological field evaluation was required in order to inform the planning process.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Duncan Coe, Archaeological Officer with West Berkshire Council and based on a brief supplied by him. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford and Aidan Colyer on 9th May 2012 and the site code is MSD 12/61. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the centre of Stanford Dingley within the Pang Valley (Fig.1) on the north side of the main road through the village, linking Bradfield and Yattendon. The site is currently overgrown. The site of Middle Cottage is represented by a concrete floor slab. Topographically, the site lies on the floor of the Pang Valley and is 30m from the course of the Pang (Fig. 2). The underlying geology consists of Valley Gravel (BGS 1946) although peat was encountered in one of the trenches. The site lies at a height of approximately 60m above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted by a brief provided by Mr Duncan Coe of West Berkshire Archaeology Service (Coe 2012). In summary the potential of the site stems from its location within the historic core of the late Saxon and medieval village, which was mentioned in Domesday Book of AD1086 (Williams and Martin 2002), known first as *Stanworde* at this time, and later due to the affiliation with the manorial family, became *Staneford Deanly* in the 15th century (Mills 1998). At the time of Domesday Book the manor village was held by William fitzAnsculf who held much of this area from the King. At the north end of the village lies a moated manor site near Manor Farm, along with parish church, dedicated to St Denys. The village has several nearby Grade II Listed buildings of 15th- and 16th-century origins, along with The Mill, just to the south of the site (Coe 2012).

The Pang Valley is rich in archaeology (Richards 1978). Some prehistoric activity, in the form of Mesolithic and Neolithic flint finds, is recorded in the nearby valley indicating prehistoric activity in the area. A Roman building is also present in this stretch of the valley further west at Eling, along with the Iron Age hillfort of Perborough Castle to the north of Hampstead Norreys.

In the 19th century Ordnance Survey maps show that parts of the site were occupied by buildings.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development.

Specific aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if there are any late Saxon or medieval settlement deposits relating to the village; and
- to determine if there are any late Saxon or medieval craft/industrial deposits on the site.

Two trenches were to be excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a back-acting toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds.

Results

Three trenches were eventually dug ranging in length from 5.5–9.4m and in depth from 0.5–2.0m. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Pls 1 and 2)

Trench 1 was aligned SE–NW. Due to access restrictions, it was only 5.5m long. Initially it was excavated to a maximum of 0.9m deep before being re-stripped. In the north-west the stratigraphy consisted of 0.2m of rooty, humic topsoil above 0.5m of made ground, mostly comprising brick rubble. This overlay a lens of chalk up to 0.1m thick. This in turn overlay 0.15m of redeposited coarse gravel which overlay the natural fine gravel which contained patches of peat.

Towards the south-east end two brick-built foundations traversed the trench. The foundations were 0.4-0.5m wide and survived to a depth of three or four courses commencing just 0.1m below the surface. The walls were parallel and 1.8m apart. The north-western wall foundation (Pl. 1) was better preserved. The bricks were unfrogged but of modern proportions with lime mortar. One side of the wall was constructed with the stretcher placed vertically whereas the other bricks were laid horizontally. The chalk and coarse gravel make up layers butted up against the foundations. The south-eastern wall was not fully exposed in the trench but appeared to be more of a rubble construction and may have largely been destroyed during demolition. These walls and the chalk/gravel consolidation layers presumably relate to the buildings present on the First Edition of the Ordnance Survey map (1879) and are most probably of mid-late 19th-century date.

The zone between the two foundations was initially observed to be peaty at a depth of 0.9m beneath rubble filled made ground and a test pit was dug in this area to fully expose the depth of peat present. This test pit was 1.6m wide and was dug to a depth of 2.05m at which depth gravel was encountered. The peat deposit, containing some woody remains, was *c.* 1.4m deep and directly overlay the gravel.

Trench 2 (Fig. 3)

This additional trench was dug to compensate for the short length of Trench 1. It was aligned NE–SW and measured 7.3m in length. It has a maximum depth of 0.75m in the south-west rising to 0.5m to the north-east. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.4m of humic topsoil containing demolition rubble (brick) and many roots overlying fine gravel. An iron service pipe at the southern end of the trench was left *in situ* on a plinth. Two ephemeral linear features, which barely penetrated the natural gravel were investigated in the trench. Both contained brick and were clearly of 19th-century or later date. No features of archaeological interest nor artefacts on the spoilheaps were noted in this trench.

Trench 3 (Figs 3 and 4; Pls 3 and 4)

This trench, located to target the position of the proposed new garage at the north end of the site, was 9.4m long and 0.54m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.5m of humic, rooty topsoil overlying fine gravel. Several features of pit and posthole size were observed cutting the natural geology. Upon investigation, all of these had loose fills and contained modern items such as slate, brick and 19th/20th century mass produced white 'china' pottery. It is possible that features were rootholes or deliberately dug pits.

Conclusion

The evaluation located brick-built foundations of structures present on late 19th- and 20th-century maps and possible pits (or treeholes) containing artefacts of 19th- or 20th-century date. Trench 1 did reveal a deep (1.3m) thickness of peat beneath the made ground and wall foundations indicating the presence of an infilled river channel in the vicinity.

References

- BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63,360, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
Coe, D, 2012, 'Land at Middle Cottage, Stanford Dingley, Berkshire, Brief for Archaeological Field Evaluation', West Berkshire Archaeological Service, Newbury
Mills, A.D, 1998, *Dictionary of English Place Names*, Oxford
NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Government, London (TSO)
Richards, J C, 1978, *The Archaeology of the Berkshire Downs*, Berkshire Archaeol Comm Pubn 3, Reading
Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S or W end

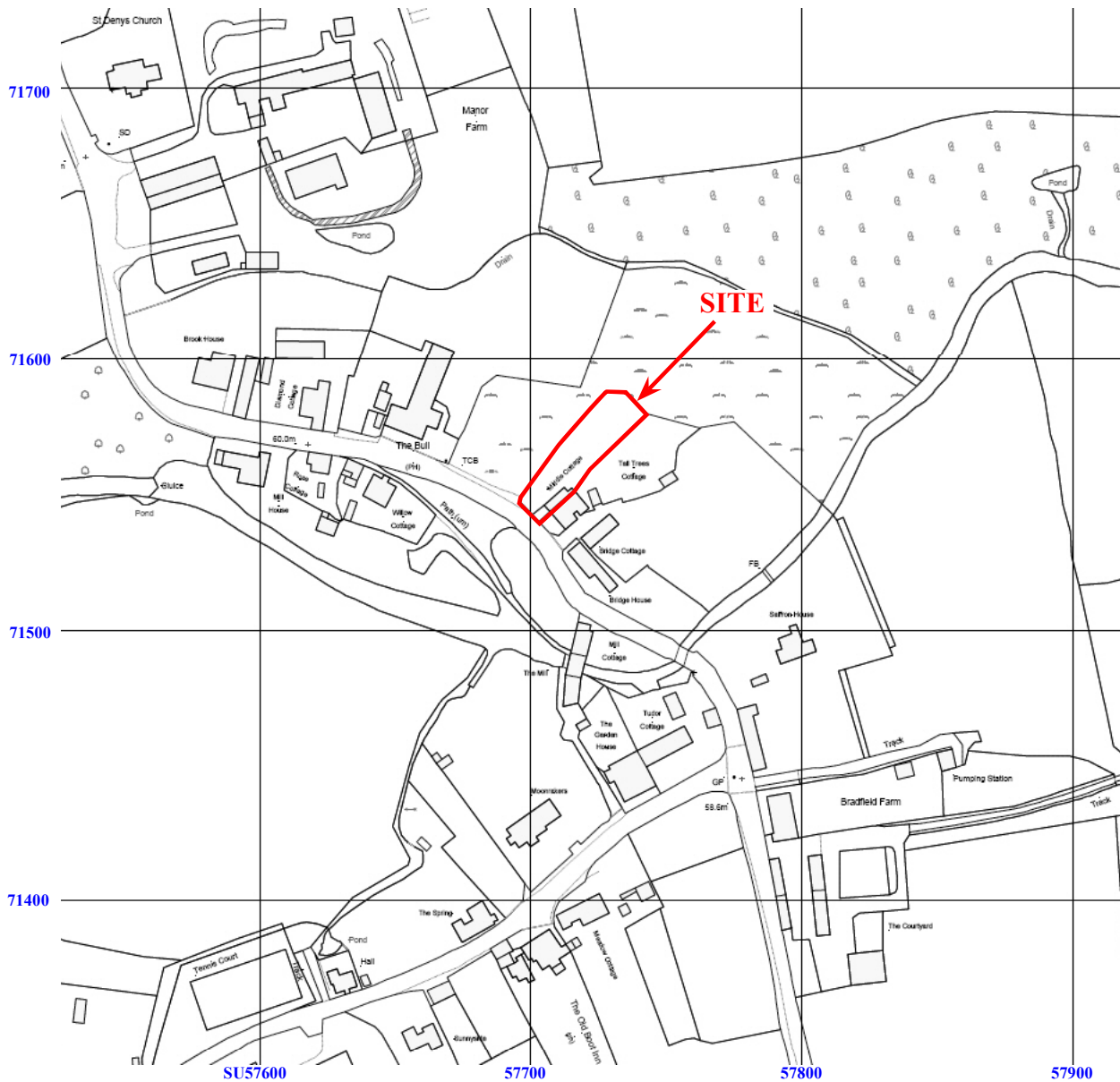
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	5.5	1.6	W=0.95 Test pit= 2.05	0–0.2m humic, rooty topsoil; 0.2–0.7m brick rubble/humic soil made ground; 0.7–0.8m chalk made ground; 0.8–0.9m coarse gravel; 0.9m+ fine gravel with peat patches. Test pit: 0.7–2.05m peat with some wood; 2.05m+ gravel Wall and probable wall at 3.5 and 5m [Pls 1 and 2]
2	7.3	1.6	N=0.5 S=0.75	0–0.4m humic rooty topsoil; 0.4m+fine gravel. Two modern shallow (<0.05m) linear patches at 3.5m and 5.6m
3	9.4	1.6	0.54	0–0.5m humic rooty topsoil; 0.5m+ fine gravel. Six modern pits and postholes or rootholes. [Pls 3 and 4]



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Figure 1. Location of site within Stanford Dingley and
West Berkshire.

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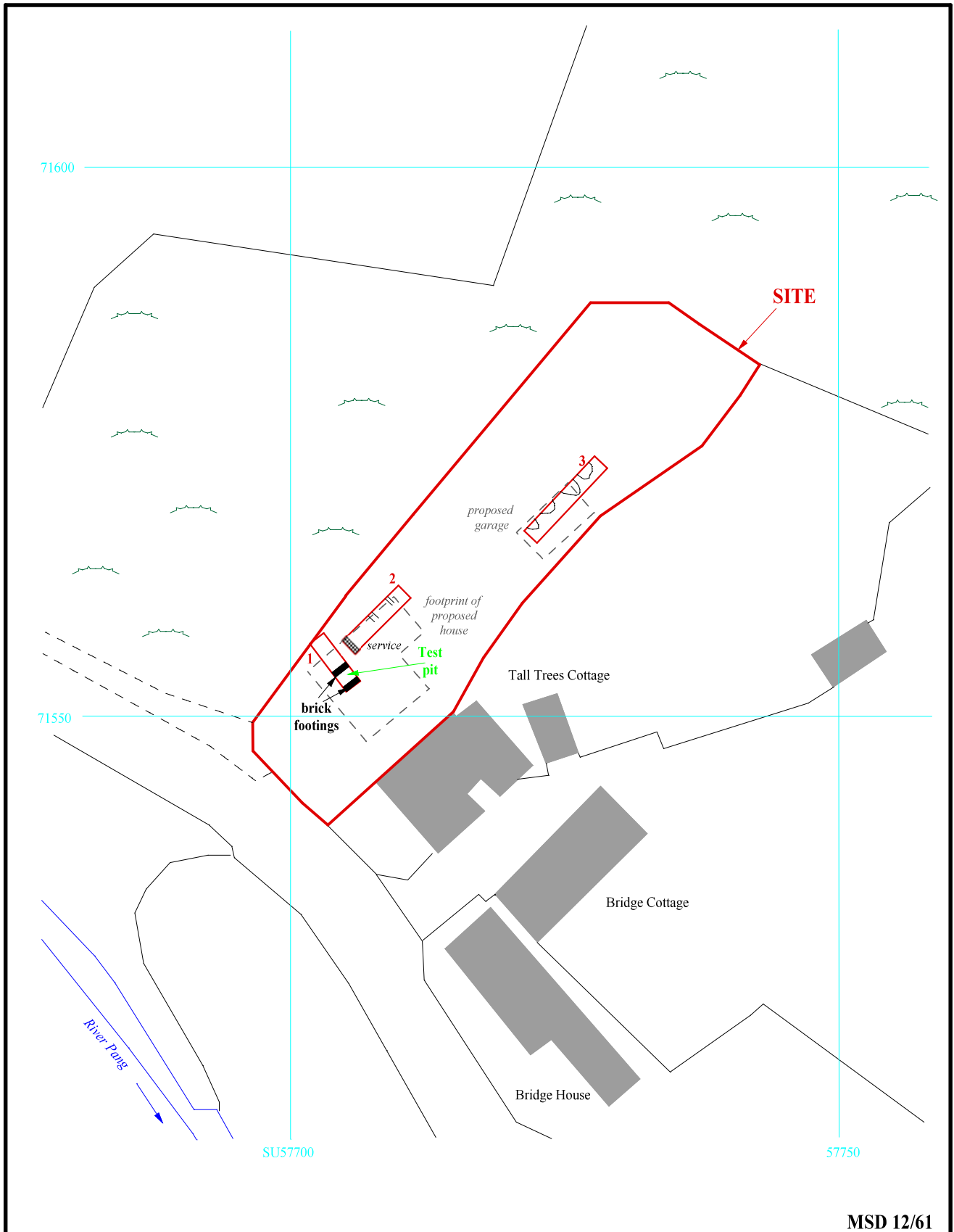


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

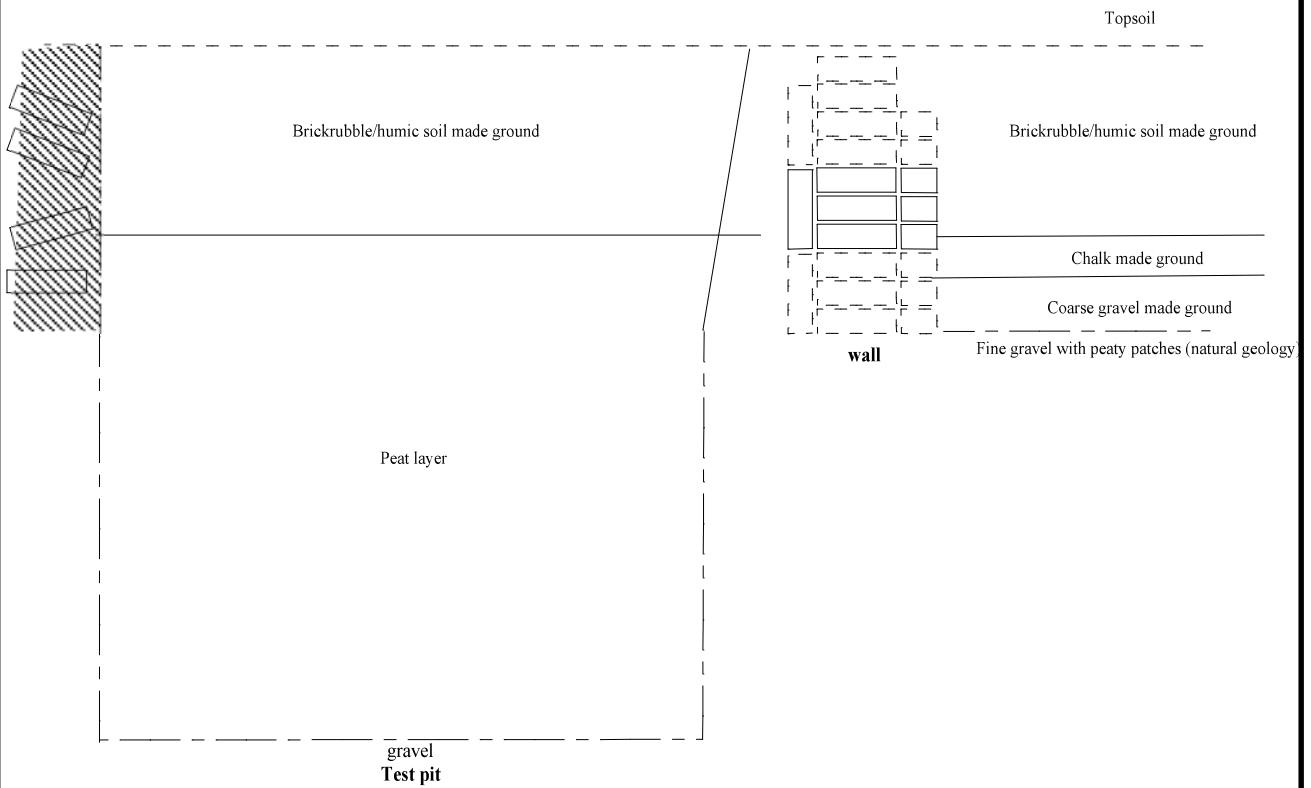


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Trench 1

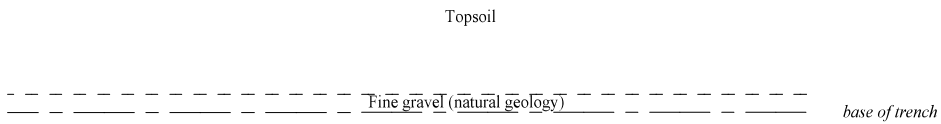
SE

NW 59.69m aOD



Trench 3

59.85 m



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Figure 4. Representative sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 1 looking south east showing brick footings. Scale; 2m.



Plate 2. Test pit in Trench 1, looking west, Scale: 2m.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 3, looking north east, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 4. Trench 3, tree hole or modern pit looking west, Scales 0.5m and 0.3m.

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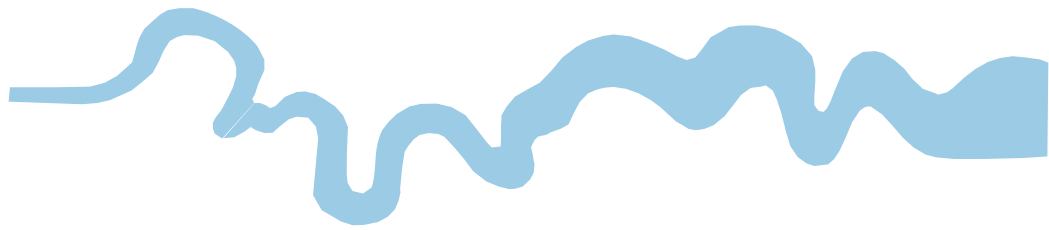
Plates 3 and 4.

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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
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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