

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 Burnham House,
Burnham, Buckinghamshire**

Archaeological Recording Action

by Susan Porter

Site Code: BHB12/17

(SU 9310 8250)

**Land to the rear of Burnham House,
Burnham, Buckinghamshire**

An Archaeological Recording Action

For Roe & Company

by Susan Porter

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

SiteCodeBHB12/17

April 2012

Summary

Site name: Land to the rear of Burnham House, Burnham, Buckinghamshire

Grid reference: SU 9310 8250

Site activity: Recording Action

Date and duration of project: 24th – 25th April 2012

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Susan Porter

Site code: BHB 12/17

Area of site: c. 80 sq m

Summary of results: A late post-medieval well was discovered alongside a modern concrete garden terrace wall and late post-medieval pit.

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

This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. All TVAS unpublished fieldwork reports are available on our website: www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 30.04.12
	Steve Preston ✓ 30.04.12

Land to the rear of Burnham House, Burnham, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Recording Action

by Susan Porter

Report 12/17

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at land to the rear of Burnham House, Burnham, Buckinghamshire SU 9310 8250 (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Peter Roe, of Roe & Co, Burnham House, 93 High Street, Burnham, Buckinghamshire, SL1 7JZ.

Planning permission (11/01939/FUL) has been gained from South Buckinghamshire District Council to construct a new house on land to the rear of Burnham House, 93 High Street, Burnham. This consent is subject to a condition relating to archaeology, as a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by 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 Ms Eliza Alqassar, Archaeological Planning and Conservation Officer of Buckinghamshire County Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Susan Porter on 24th – 25th April 2012 and the site code is BHB 12/17.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire Museum Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the centre of Burnham (Fig. 1). The area lies to the rear of Burnham House on the western side of the High Street, surrounded by residential development (Fig. 2). The land lies at an elevation of 53.3m above Ordnance Datum and currently forms part of a rear garden to Burnham House and is unused, although there is some evidence for previous landscaping, in the form of mounded earth and concrete flower beds/ terraces. The underlying geology is recorded as Boyn Hill Gravel (BGS 2005) and this was observed on site.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a briefing letter for the project provided by Ms Eliza Alqassar of Buckinghamshire County Council. Little previous archaeological work has taken place in Burnham's medieval core. The site is located to the rear of the High Street within what is considered to be the back plots of any medieval tenement present. Burnham has late Saxon Origins and is mentioned in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002, 415), at which time it was quite a substantial manor. However, it was not until the founding of a market by Burnham Abbey in 1271 that urbanization is thought to have begun, with the laying out of the High Street (Alqassar 2012). The town has been studied as part of Buckinghamshire's Historic Towns Project (English Heritage 2010) and the proposed development area is located on the edge of the medieval settlement within the 'burgage-type' plots along the High Street. It was considered likely that medieval and post-medieval backland activity, wells, buildings, property boundaries and pits may have survived on the site. Nos 93 and 93a High Street are 18th- to 19th- century listed buildings.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the recording action was to determine the presence/ absence, extent, condition, character, quality, and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. This work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which would warrant preservation in-situ, or might be better excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels had survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present; and
- to determine whether archaeological deposits relating to the Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval settlement are present.

The excavation was to comprise examination of a rectangular area of land of c.80 sq m coinciding with the footprint of the new development. Topsoil and overburden were to be removed by a machine fitted with a ditching bucket to expose the archaeologically relevant layers. Where archaeological features were present, the areas were to be cleaned and excavated using hand tools.

Results

The footprint of the proposed development was stripped of overburden using a JCB-type machine as planned (Fig. 3). To the west side of the site the stratigraphy comprised 0.20m OF very dark brown grey silty sand topsoil (50), overlying 0.40m dark reddish brown silty sand subsoil (51). This stratigraphy was uniform across the site except for in the north-east corner where the garden had been previously landscaped. The stratigraphy here comprised 0.10m topsoil, overlying 0.60m mid yellow brown silty sand made ground (57) with modern brick and tile, which in turn overlay subsoil. The natural geology was mid orangey brown silty sand with dense gravel patches. Three features of possible archaeological interest were revealed within the area of excavation comprising a late post-medieval well, modern concrete wall, and a pit.

The Well (Figs 4 and 5; Pls 1-3)

A brick lined well, with brick dome and concrete cap was revealed on the northern edge of the site. The construction cut (1) was 2m in diameter and at least 2m in depth, and between the cut and the brick structure lay deposit 53, friable mid brown grey silty sand. This was 0.30m wide and excavated to a depth of 0.25m, but no finds were recovered. The bricks of the well (52) measured 222mm in length, 80mm wide and 70mm deep, with no visible bonding material below the domed cap. The dome of the well stands 0.25m above the surface of the natural geology and is capped with a disk of concrete (54) 0.50m wide and 0.10m thick. Below the concrete cap is a 2m deep void, in which no water was visible, however, a galvanised steel bucket of 19th or 20th century date could be seen at the base (Vince 1992). The concrete cap has a notch roughly 0.20m across in the southern side which may have been for a pipe, indicating the likely feed for a pump.

The domed shape and notched concrete cap suggest that in its final use, it was as a waterbottle type well, designed to be used with a pump, probably fed by a lead pipe. The bucket may relate to an earlier use of the well. A representative brick was temporarily retained as a sample.

Pit and Concrete Wall

At the east of the site, pit 2 was a 1.20m square in plan with a depth of 0.40m; it was filled with loose very dark grey brown clayey sand with gravel (56) and demonstrated signs of heavy rooting/ animal disturbance. Pottery (china), tile, two oyster shells and glass (including a complete glass jar) were recovered from the pit. The finds are no earlier than the 18th century and more probably 19th.

Along the south edge of the area, a concrete wall (55) was 5m in length, 0.25m wide and stood 0.45m in height. The wall was curving along the southern edge of the area of excavation, the southern face of the wall had

been smoothed but overall the wall was of rough concrete composition and had no visible construction cut. To the south of the area of excavation was evidence for brick and concrete garden terracing and it seems likely that this concrete wall relates to a modern phase of garden terracing. No finds were recovered.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised six sherds with a total weight of 145g. It all occurred in a single pit (2, context 56). It was recorded using the coding system of the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit type-series (e.g. Mynard and Zeepvat 1992; Zeepvat et al. 1994), as follows:

PM25: White Earthenware. Late 18th – 20th century. 5 sherds, 76g.

PM28: English Stoneware. Late 17th century onwards. 1 sherd, 69g.

The sherds are all in good condition and reliably stratified. The range of wares is typical of mid to late 19th-century sites in the region.

Animal Bone by Ceri Falys

A single piece of animal bone was recovered from pit 2. The fragment, weighing 20g, was identified as the distal one-third portion of a right sheep/goat tibia. No further information could be retrieved.

Ceramic Building Materials by Danielle Milbank

A single brick sample (in two pieces) was taken from the structure of the well (52). It is a handmade uneven brick, with a shallow irregular frog indented on one side suggesting a repaired mould. The rough surface indicates that it was a sandy mould. The fabric is hard, evenly fired and sandy with poorly sorted inclusions including some flint. It measures 235mm x 107mm x 62mm. It is of a broadly 18th- or early 19th-century date, probably from the early part of this period (c.1700-1780).

Eight fragments of tile including peg tile were recovered from pit 2 (56). Peg tile was used from the 12th century until the modern period.

Metalwork by Steven Crabb

A single nail was recovered from pit 2 (56) and it measures 66mm long.

Glass by Steven Crabb

Two fragments of glass and one almost complete jar were recovered from pit 2 (56). The two fragments are green bottle glass, one a base fragment and one a body fragment. The jar is 110mm high and 75mm across and made of clear glass. The body is cylindrical with a flat bottom stamped with a triangular mark with the number 565 in the centre. The top of the jar is damaged but does not have a screw thread only a splayed outer rim.

Shell by Steven Crabb

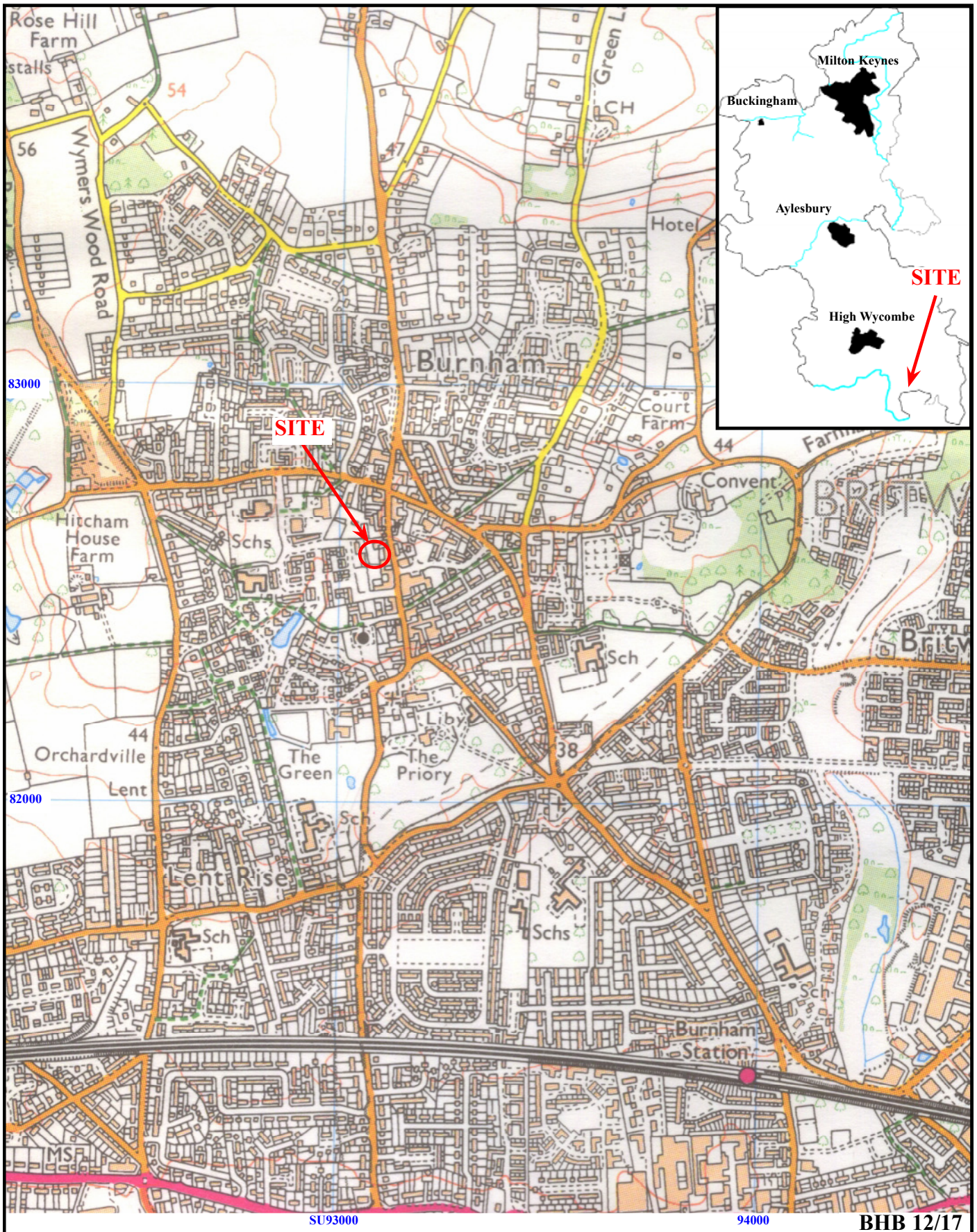
Two pieces of oyster shell were recovered from pit 2 (56) both are from the curved (upper) shell and are damaged and worn. One has a number of small worm marks across its surface suggesting that it may have been a farmed oyster contracting parasites from close contact with other oysters.

Conclusion

The well and other features revealed by this recording action were of late post-medieval date and as such do not add to the understanding of Saxon or medieval Burnham. The modern pit and concrete wall indicate that the landscape has been partially sculptured/ terraced at some point ,and presumably it and the well relate to the use of Burnham House.

References

- Alqassar, E, 2012, 'Land rear of Burnham House, 93 High Street, Burnham, Buckinghamshire, SL1 7JZ: Erection of detached dwelling' advice letter, Buckinghamshire County Council, Aylesbury
- BGS, 2005, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 255, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- English Heritage, 2010, *Burnham, Historic Town Assessment report*, English Heritage, London
- Mynard, D C and Zeepvat, R J, 1992, *Great Linford*, Buckinghamshire Archaeol Soc Monogr Ser **3**, Aylesbury
- PPS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, The Stationery Office, Norwich
- Vince, J, 1992, *Wells and Pumps*, Princes Risborough
- Williams, A and Martin, G, H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London
- Zeepvat, R J, Roberts J S and King, N A, 1994, *Caldecotte, Milton Keynes: Excavation and fieldwork 1966–91*, Buckinghamshire Archaeol Soc Monogr **9**, Aylesbury



**Burnham House, 93 High Street, Burnham,
Buckinghamshire, 2012**
Archaeological Recording Action
 Figure 1. Location of site within Burnham and
 Buckinghamshire.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Explorer 172 at 1:12500
 Ordnance Survey Licence 100025880





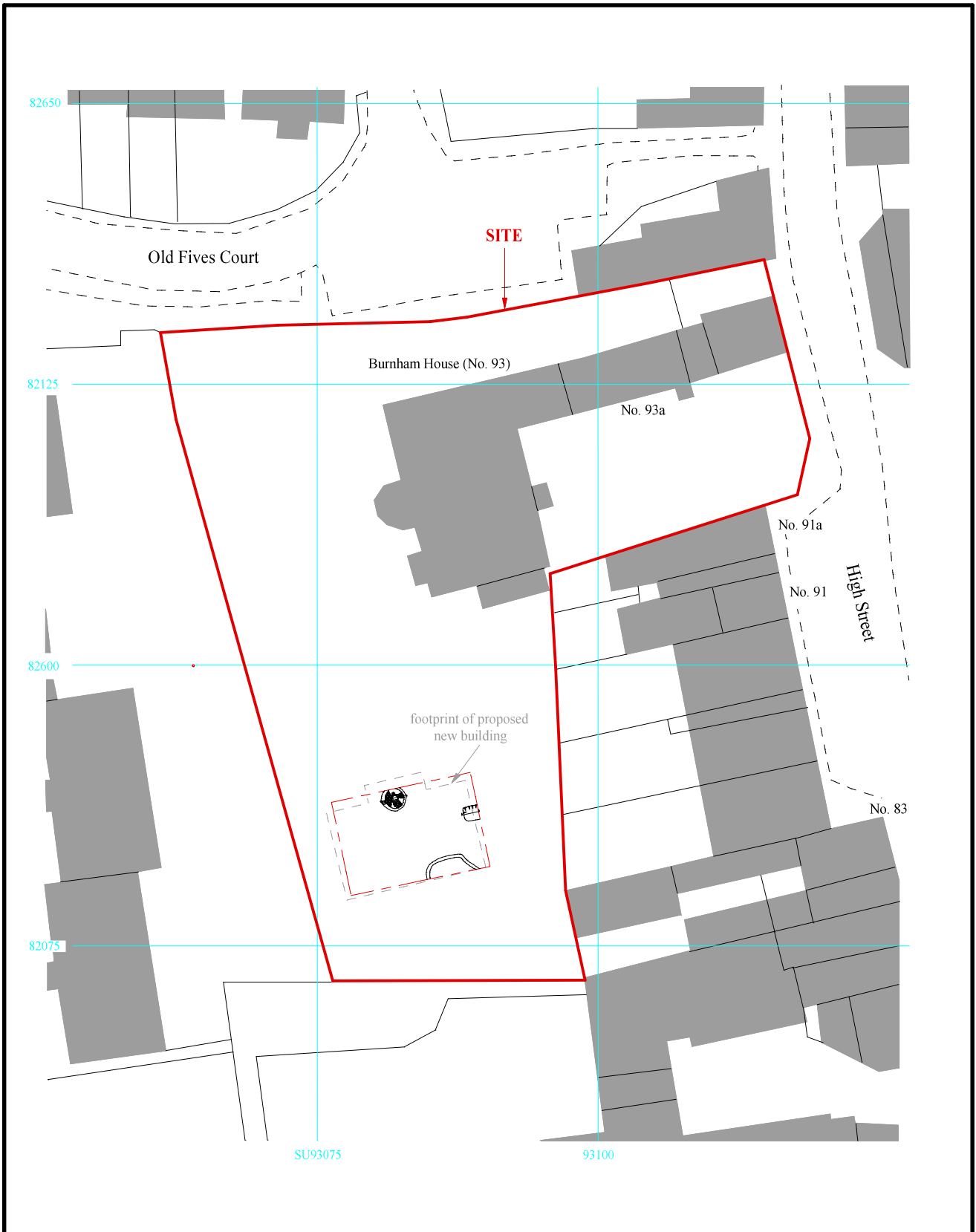
BHB 12/17



**Burnham House, 93 High Street, Burnham,
Buckinghamshire, 2012
Archaeological Recording Action**
Figure 2. Detailed location of site off High Street.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital mapping under licence.
Crown copyright reserved. Scale: 1:1250

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



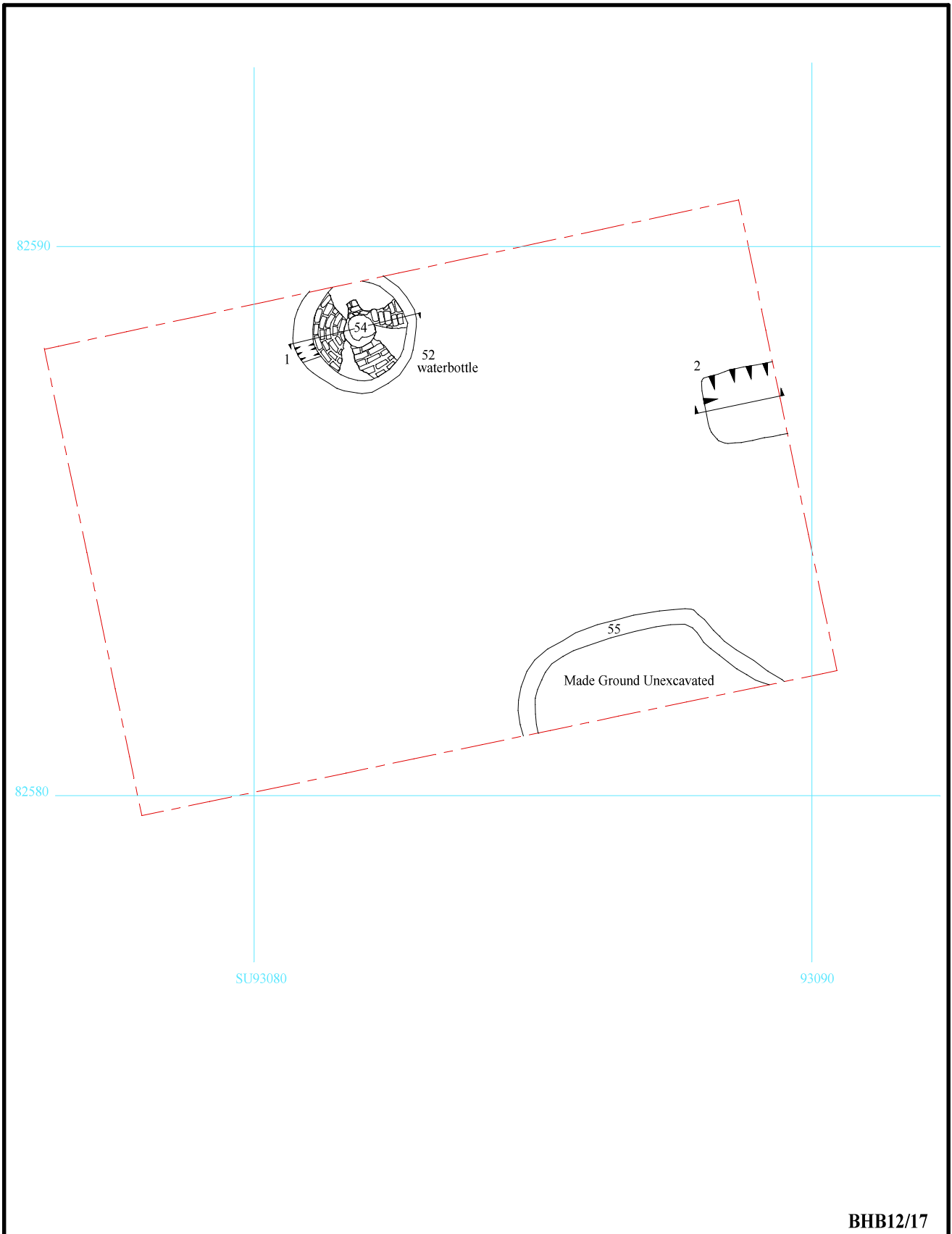
BHB 12/17

**Burnham House, 93 High Street, Burnham,
Buckinghamshire, 2012
Archaeological Recording Action**

Figure 3. Location of trench.



THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



BHB12/17

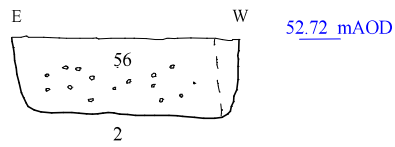
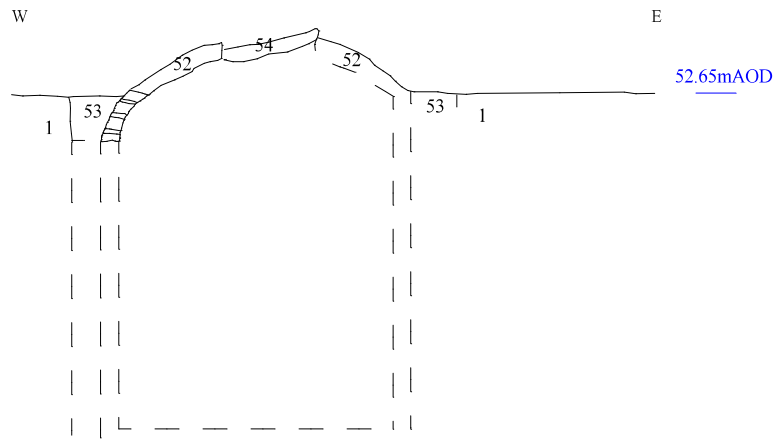


**Burnham House, 93 High Street, Burnham
Buckinghamshire, 2012
Archaeological Recording Action**

Figure. 4. Detailed plan of excavation area



THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



BHB12/17

**Burnham House, 93 High Street, Burnham
Buckinghamshire, 2012
Archaeological Recording Action**

Figure 5. Sections



THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



Plate 1. Structure 52, looking north, Scales: 2m and 1m



Plate 2. Interior of Structure 52, looking north.

BHB 12/17

Burnham House, 93 High Street, Burnham, Buckinghamshire, 2012
Archaeological Recording Action

Plates 1 and 2.

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



Plate 3. Cut 1 and Structure 52, looking north, Scales: 0.5m and 0.3m.



Plate 4. Pit 2, looking south, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

BHB 12/17

Burnham House, 93 High Street, Burnham, Buckinghamshire, 2012
Archaeological Recording Action

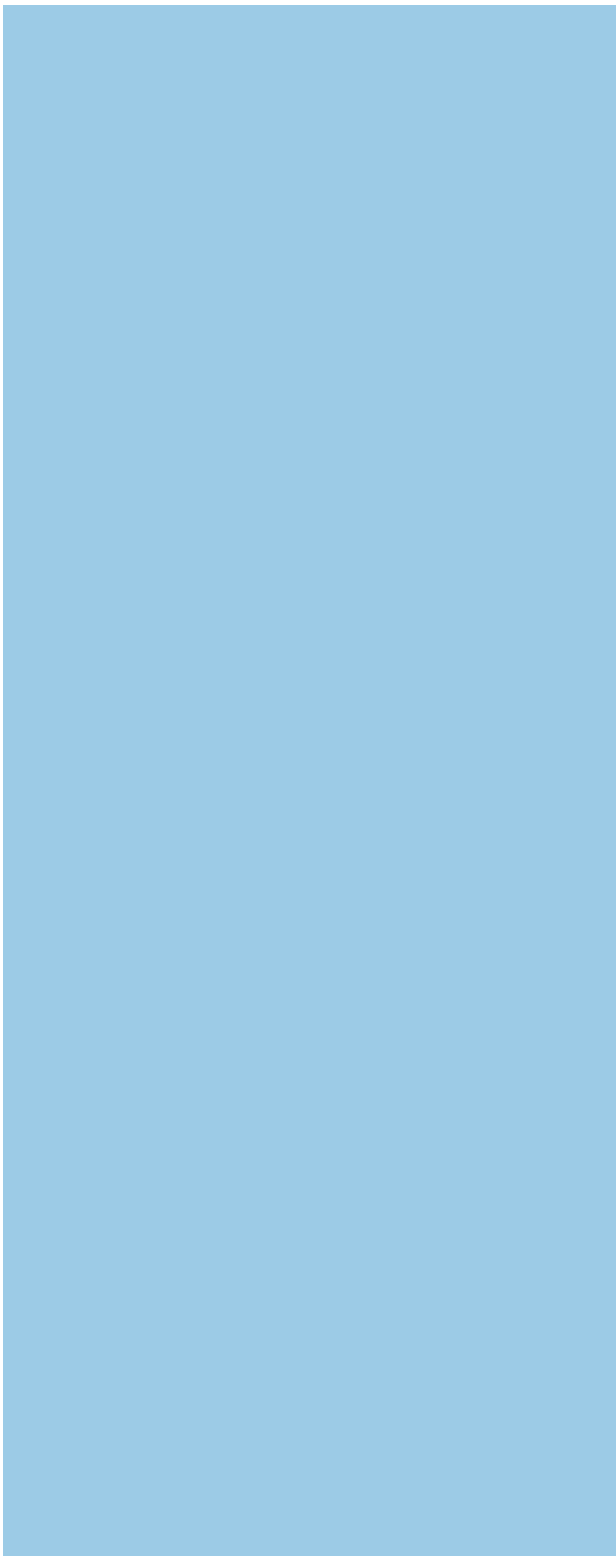
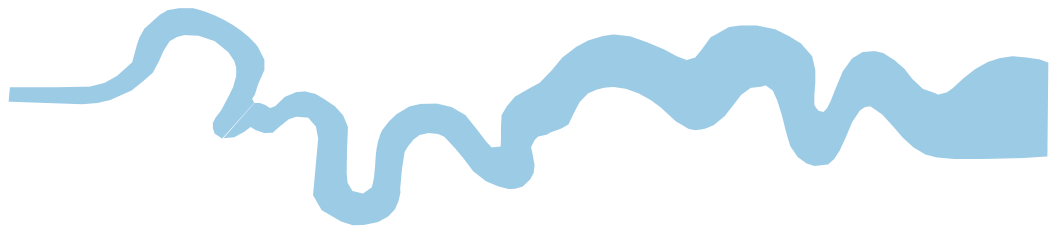
Plates 3 and 4.

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES

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**