

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land between 14-16 Amwell Place,
Cholsey, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Christopher Crabb

Site Code: APC12/15

(SU 5891 8644)

Land between 14-16 Amwell Place, Cholsey, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For N L Contractors Limited

by Christopher Crabb
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code APC12/15

July 2012

Summary

Site name: Land between 14-16 Amwell Place, Cholsey, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 5891 8644

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 27th–29th June 2012

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Christopher Crabb

Site code: APC 12/15

Summary of results: The watching brief recorded the presence of a large ditch, tentatively of medieval date which appears to be a continuation of a ditch recorded in previous fieldwork to the north. A single undated pit was also recorded.

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 04.07.12 Steve Preston✓ 04.07.12
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Land between 14-16 Amwell Place, Cholsey, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

By Christopher Crabb

Report 12/15

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on the land between 14-16 Amwell Place, Cholsey, Oxfordshire (SU 5891 8644) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Keith Halson, of Halson Mackley Partnership, 27 Ancastle Green, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 1TR on behalf of N L Contractors Limited, 29 Lapwing Lane, Cholsey, Wallingford, OX10 9QS.

Planning permission has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for the erection of a pair of semi-detached houses with access and parking to each (P11/W0535). Due to the potential disturbance of below-ground archaeological features a condition has been attached to the planning permission requiring that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during the period of ground works. 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 supplied by him (Oram 2012). The fieldwork was undertaken by Steven Crabb and Christopher Crabb between the 27th and 29th of June 2012. The site code is APC 12/15.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the village of Cholsey, on land west of Amwell Place (Fig. 2). Cholsey itself lies c.3km south-west of Wallingford in the Thames Valley. The underlying geology is Lower Chalk, (BGS 1980). The site lies at a height of c. 50m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) level with a very gentle slope across site towards the west.

Archaeological background

Cholsey has origins in the late Saxon period, and has been considered an important local centre with the church of St Mary's thought to be associated with King Æthelred from the time of the foundation of the Benedictine Abbey in AD986 (Blair 1994, 114; Brigg *et al.* 1986). Cholsey is also mentioned in the 1086 Domesday Book.

Fieldwork immediately to the west of the extant abbey earthworks which are to the south-west of the site revealed no archaeological deposits or finds (Dawson 2009) whereas fieldwork on Station Road area south-east of the parish church revealed gullies and ditches of possible medieval date (Bray 2012), and others tentatively interpreted as field boundaries dated to the Roman period (Taylor 2010). A watching brief closer to the church on Church Road produced a number of medieval deposits (Coles 2005). However, a watching brief at Honey Lane revealed only modern activity (Bennett 2007), and a second on Station Road also revealed little of interest (Mundin 2011).

The archaeological potential for this site in particular is due to its location 120m east of the projected line of the Roman road from Dorchester to Silchester (Margary 1973; Henig and Booth 2000), also, work undertaken at Amwell Place immediately to the north showed early medieval and medieval linear features, including an enclosure ditch which appears to extend southwards into the area of this site (Oram 2012).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This was to involve the examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular monitoring of the excavation of foundation and service trenches, area strips for access roads, and other deeply intrusive features such as soakaways.

Results

At the time of the watching brief, the turf and humic topsoil for the areas of the footings had been previously stripped down to expose the subsoil by a mechanical excavator with bladed bucket.

The foundation trenches

The footings were excavated with a 0.6m wide bucket varying from 0.25–0.4m deep, to a depth of 1.0–1.1m (Fig. 3). A cut seen in the southernmost footing aligned east-west appeared to be a large shallow pit, 1, measuring 2.4m across and 0.45m deep (Fig. 3). It was seen only on the north facing side of the footing and presumably extends further to the south. This feature was filled with a moderately firm mid-brownish white clayey silt (52) with moderate chalk gravel but produced no dating evidence.

The easternmost footing aligned north-south cut along the length of a substantial ditch (2, 3, 4, 5) aligned approximately north-south (Pl. 1 and Fig. 3) of which only the westernmost slope was clearly seen in section (Pl. 2 and Fig. 4). However, the footings were not excavated to a depth where the base could be seen. The lower

slopes of the eastern side of the ditch were disturbed by tree root activity and the footings did not extend eastwards far enough to show any more than 0.3m of the eastern slope. The width of this ditch was at least 2.45m and it extended across the entire width of the footing. It was filled with a firm mid brownish-grey clayey silt (53, 54, 55, 56) with very occasional sub-rounded flints and moderate chalk gravel. Three small sherds of pottery of medieval pottery of 13th -14th-century date came from spoil that might have originated from ditch slot 3 (54) though there is doubt about their exact provenance.

Soakaways

Two soakaways were dug to the west of the footings. The stratigraphy observed comprised 0.3m of topsoil over subsoil of a depth varying from 0.3m to 0.5m below which the natural chalk was encountered. The stratigraphy of both soakaways was similar and nothing of archaeological significance was observed.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 3 sherds with a total weight of 5g. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor and Oakley 1984; Mellor 1994), as follows:

WA38: Wallingford ware, AD1050 – 1250. 1 sherd, 3g.

OXAG: Abingdon ware, mid/late 11th – mid 14th century. 1 sherd, 1g.

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 1 sherd, 1g.

The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. The whole assemblage comprised bodysherds, with the fragment of OXAG having an external green glaze, and likely to be from a jug. The pottery all occurred in ditch 3, context 54, which appears likely to be of 13th – 14th century date, although all the sherds are small and a little abraded, so residuality is a distinct possibility.

Conclusion

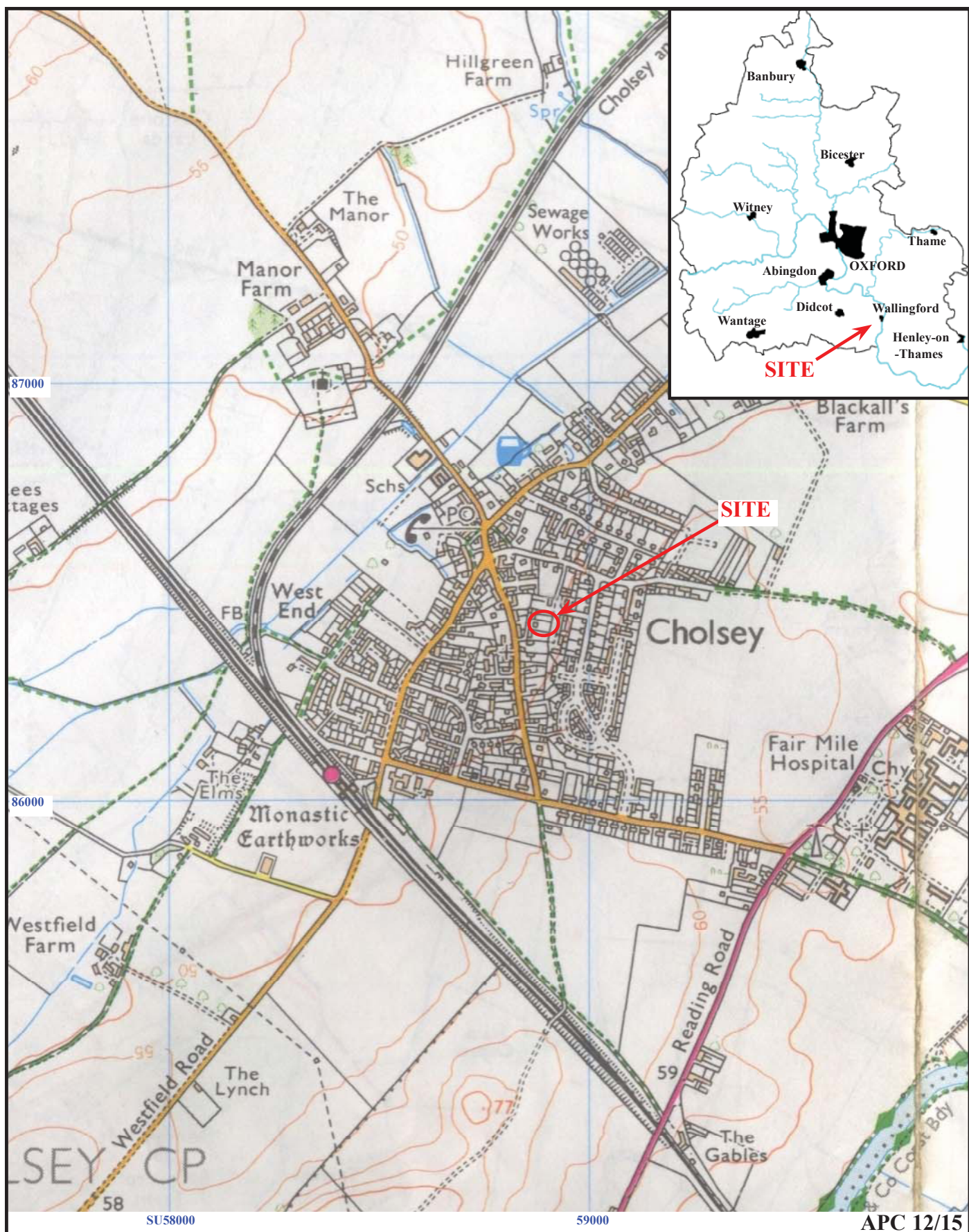
The watching brief has recorded the presence of a large ditch that appears to be the same as that recorded during previous fieldwork on an adjacent plot to the north. A few small sherds of medieval pottery of 13th-14th century date are likely to have come from this ditch though their small size and exact provenance require caution in using them as solid dating evidence. An undated pit was also recorded.

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APPENDIX 1: Feature details

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit(s)</i>	<i>Feature type</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Date</i>
	50	Topsoil		
	51	subsoil		
1	52	Pit		Undated
2	53	Ditch	Possible enclosure ditch	Medieval?
3	54	Ditch	Part of possible enclosure ditch	Medieval?
4	55	Ditch	Part of possible enclosure ditch	Medieval?
5	56	Ditch	Part of possible enclosure ditch	Medieval?



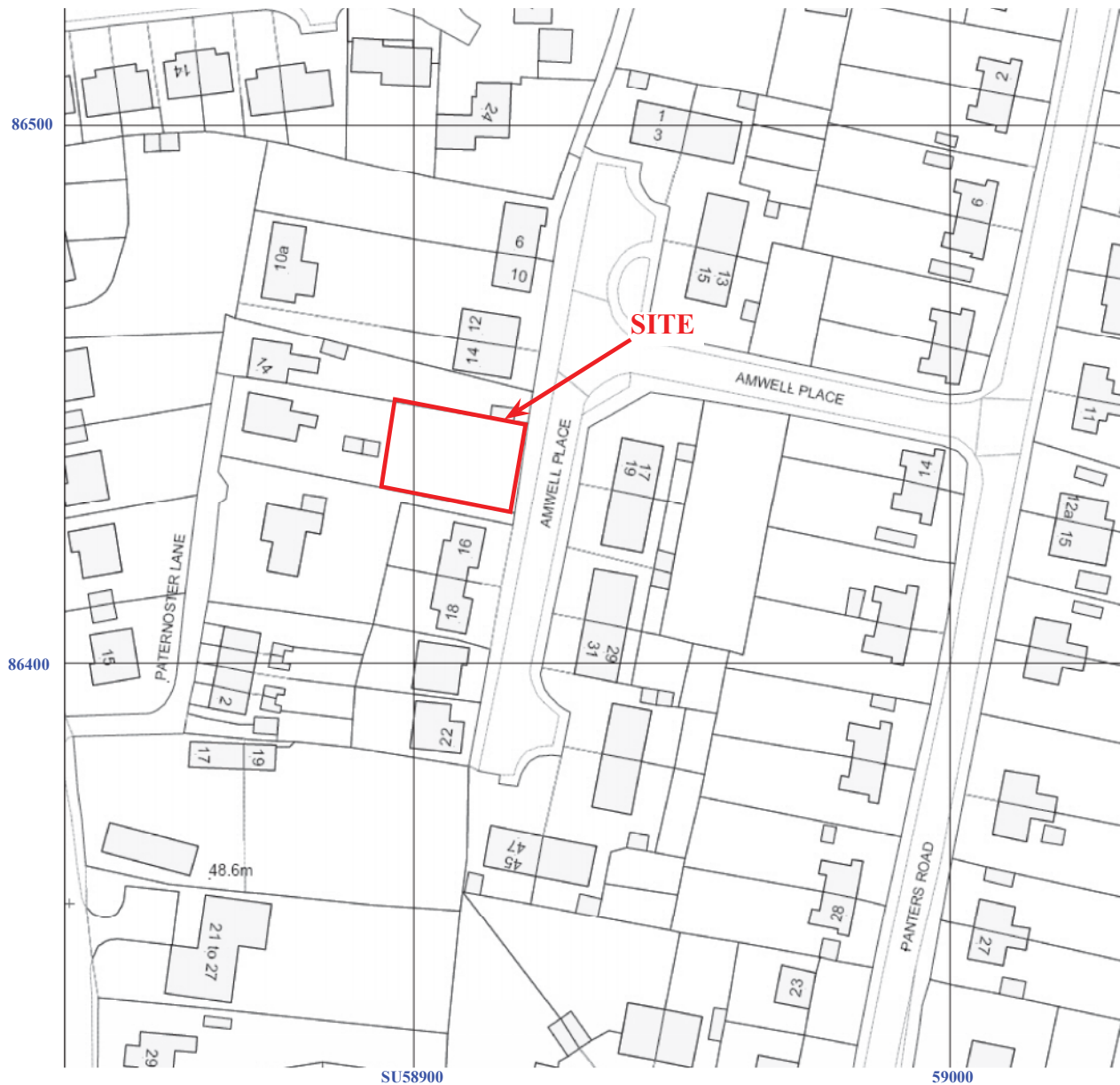
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Figure 1. Location of site within Cholsey and Oxfordshire.

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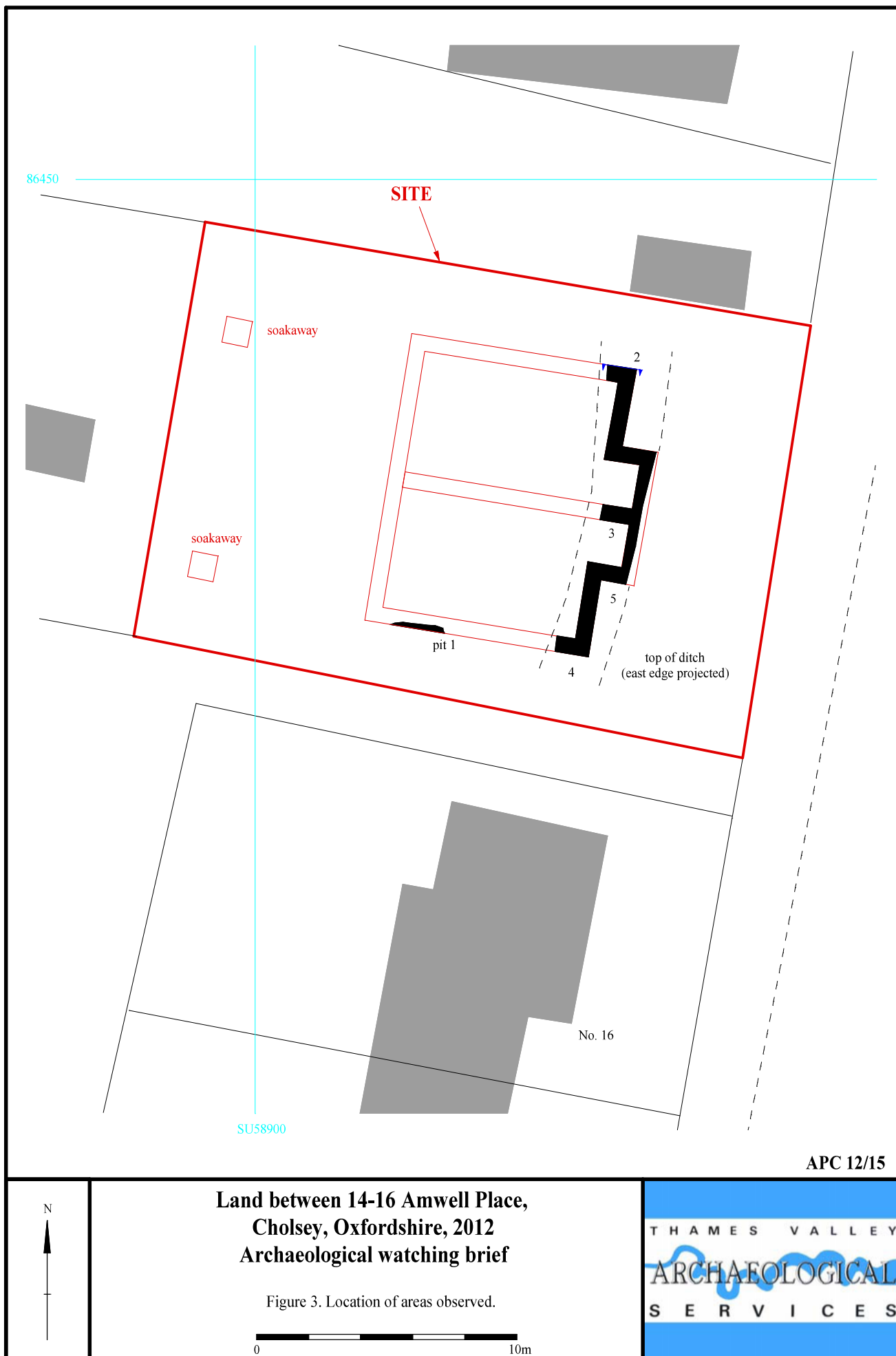
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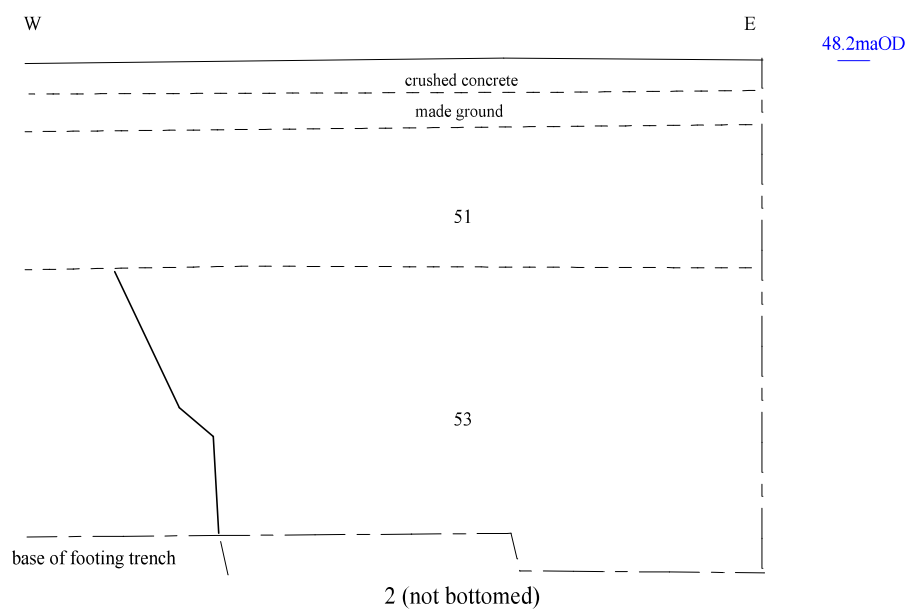
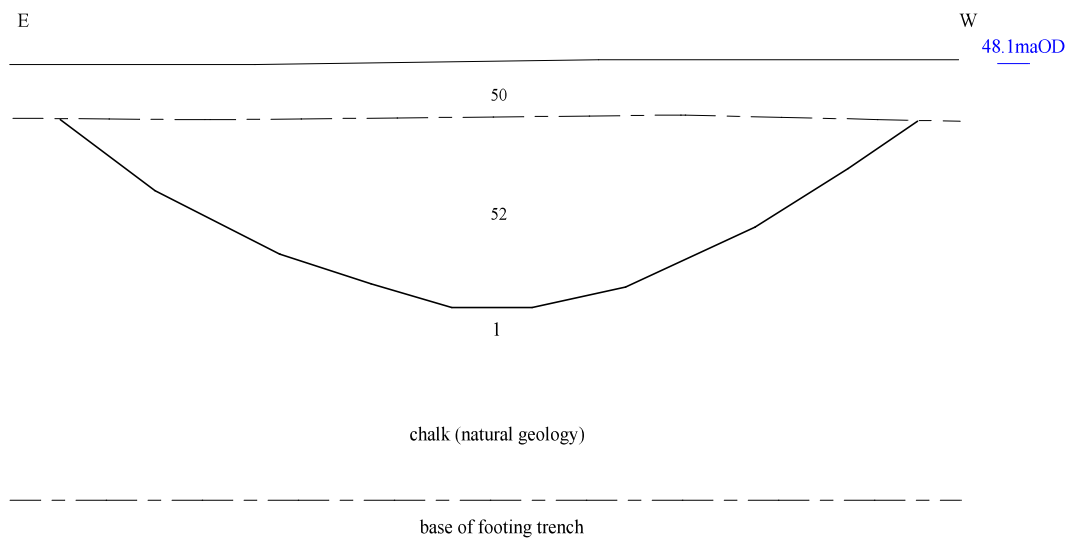


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Amwell Place.

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Figure 4. Sections.



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Plate 1. Line of ditch cut by foundation, looking south, horizontal scale: 2m, vertical scale 2m.



Plate 2. Ditch section (cut 2), looking north, horizontal scale: 2m, vertical scale 2m..

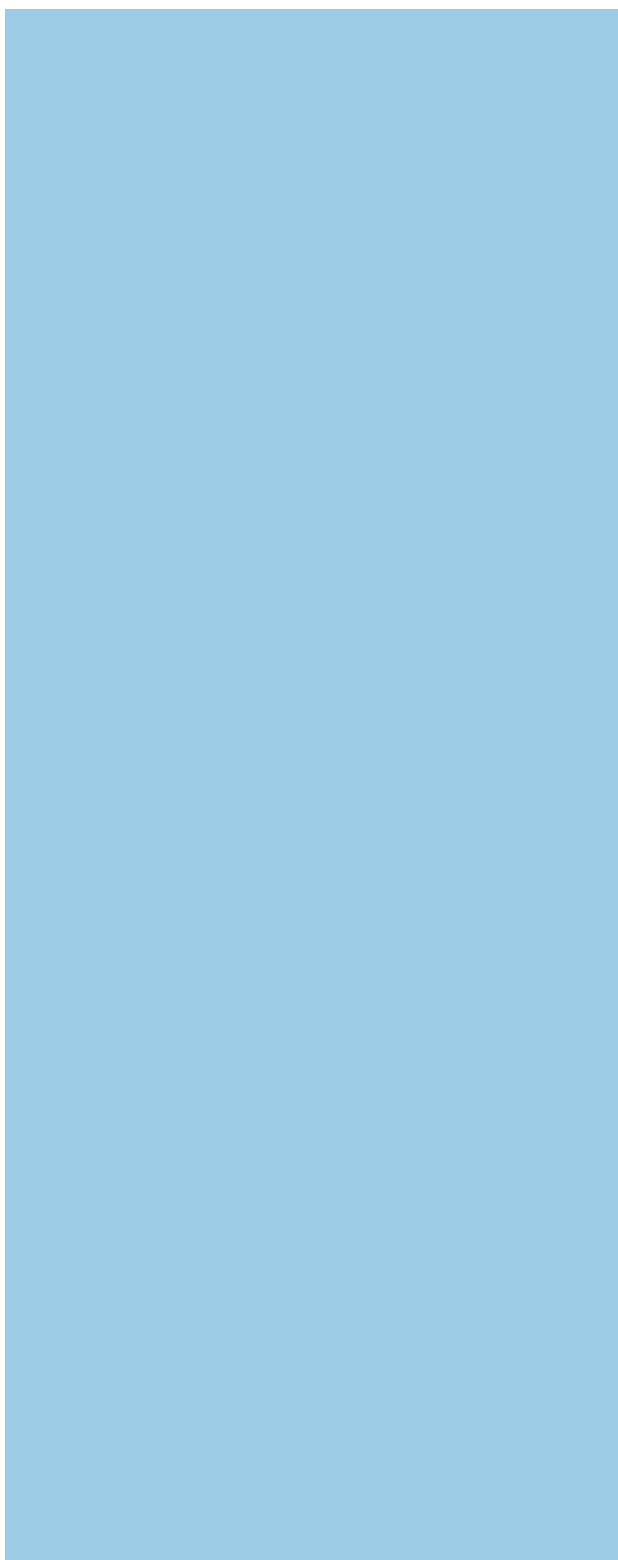
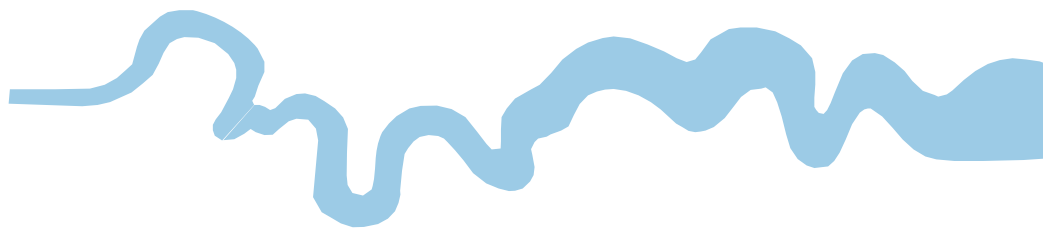
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Plates 1 and 2.

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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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