THAMES VALLEY

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31 Church Lane, Old Marston, Oxford

Archaeological Evaluation

by David Platt

Site Code: CLM12/146

(SP 5275 0898)

31 Church Lane, Old Marston, Oxford

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Mr John Smith

by David Platt

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CLM12/146

September 2012

Summary

Site name: 31 Church Lane, Old Marston, Oxford

Grid reference: SP 5275 0898

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 12th September 2012

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: David Platt

Site code: CLM 12/146

Area of site: 0.18ha

Summary of results: A single pit most likely of 14th century date was uncovered.

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.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 25.09.12
	Steve Preston✓ 25.09.12

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31 Church Lane, Old Marston, Oxford
An Archaeological Evaluation

by David Platt

Report 12/146

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at 31 Church Lane, Old Marston, Oxford (SP5275 0898) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr John Smith of 31 Church Lane, Old Marston, Oxford, OX3 0PT. Planning permission (12/02159/FUL) has been sought from Oxford City Council for the construction of 3 new houses. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by groundworks, a field evaluation has been requested in order to provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site to inform the planning process and to provide information to allow a scheme to be designed so as to mitigate the effects of the development on the archaeological resource. This is as detailed in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the City Council's policies on archaeology.

The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Radford, Archaeological Officer for Oxford City Council and based on a specification provided by him (Radford 2012). The fieldwork was undertaken by David Platt and Daniel Bray on 12th September 2012 and the site code is CLM12/146. 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

Marston is located approximately 3km north-east of the centre of the city of Oxford on the eastern edge of the floodplain of the River Cherwell at 66m above Ordnance Datum (Fig. 1). The site is located within the centre of Marston on the eastern side of Church Lane, amidst residential development (Fig. 2). The river flows north to south to join the River Thames approximately 2km to the south. The natural geology of the site is mapped as 2nd Terrace gravels (BGS 1982). A mixture of gravels (Trench 1) and Oxford clay (Trenches 2 and 3) was encountered during the fieldwork.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the historic (medieval) core of Marston some 50m from the parish church of St Nicholas. Marston is not mentioned in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002). A modest number of earlier finds are recorded for the environs of the site with Roman finds to the south-east (Dodd 2003). Recent excavations immediately to the south documented Medieval occupation which commenced in the 11th century and ceased in the 14th century (Lewis and Preston 2012).

Objectives and methodology

The general 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. The specific research aims of this project were:

to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site;

to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and

to determine if any deposits relating to the medieval and early post-medieval Marston are present.

Three trenches each 10m long and 1.6m wide were to be dug targeting the areas most affected by the proposed development. These were to be dug by using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket and under constant archaeological supervision, either down to the natural geology or until archaeological features were encountered. All archaeological deposits were to be hand cleaned, excavated and recorded, except where such remains might warrant preservation *in situ* or might better be investigated under the conditions appertaining to full excavation. All spoil heaps were to be monitored for artefacts.

Results

All the trenches were dug as intended. They were all 1.6m wide and ranged in length from 10 to 11.30m and in depth from 0.50 to 0.90m. 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; Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned east–west and was 10.30m long and between 0.76 and 0.50m deep with the topsoil being thicker towards the east due to garden landscaping. The stratigraphy consisted of between 0.18–0.34m of topsoil overlying 0.30m of made ground. This directly overlay the natural geology which consisted of a reddish brown mixture of clay and gravel. A post medieval/modern pit (1) was 0.90m in diameter and filled with a dark

brownish grey sandy silt (52). This pit was not excavated as pottery, ceramic building material and glass were recovered from the uppermost layers and confirmed that the pit was late post medieval/modern in date.

Trench 2 (Fig 3)

Trench 2 was aligned SE–NW and was 11.30m long and 0.90m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.38m of topsoil overlying 0.12m of dark grey clayey silt, which in turn overlay 0.29m of mid greenish grey silty clay which overlay the natural geology which consisted of a mottled grey and brown mixture of clay and gravel. No finds or features were observed.

Trench 3 (Figs 3, 4 and 5; Pl. 2)

Trench 3 was aligned SW–NE and was 10.0m long and 0.88m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil overlying 0.17m of dark grey sandy silt. This in turn overlay 0.38m of mid brownish grey sandy silt directly overlying the natural geology which consisted of a pale reddish brown sandy gravel. Two features were observed within this trench, pits 2 and 3. Pit (2) was oval in plan and filled with a dark brownish grey sandy silt. This pit was not excavated as it contained pottery, metal, ceramic building material and glass that were clearly modern in date.

Pit 3 was large with steep slightly concave sides. The excavation of the pit stopped at 0.55m deep as it was against the trench section and was therefore 1.40m below the current ground level, the pit had also filled with water due to the depth. Pit 3 was filled with at least two separate deposits, these consisted of a mid brownish grey silty clay with occasional stone inclusions (54); this contained pottery, bone and oyster shell. This overlay a dark brownish grey silty clay with occasional gravel inclusions (55) which had no finds. Pit 3 was cut by Pit 2 and this was visible in plan.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 69 sherds with a total weight of 1577g. It was all medieval or later. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor and Oakley 1984; Mellor 1994), as follows:

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975–1350. 2 sherds, 46g.
OXBF: North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD1050–1400. 36 sherds, 806g.
OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD1075–1350. 3 sherds, 28g.
OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200–1600. 20 sherds, 631g.
OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550 onwards. 1 sherd, 26g.
WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, 19th to 20th century. 7 sherds, 40g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 3. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region.

All the medieval pottery came from a single pit, context 54. It appears to be a primary deposit, as it mainly comprised large sherds from two large jars in fabric OXBF, and a number of similarly-sized fragments of a small number of decorated OXAM jugs, although a few sherds with a plain orange glaze, typical of the mid 14th – 15th century products of the Brill/Boarstall industry, were also present. This date is supported by the fact that the sherds of OXAC and OXY appear largely residual, as such pottery had all but fallen from use by the mid-14th century in the region.

It appears to be a typical domestic assemblage. One sherd worthy of note is a complete base-pad of an OXAM jug which is, unusually, heavily burnt and blackened on the outside, and has a thick deposit of lime-scale on the inner surface, indicating that it had been used for boiling water, probably repeatedly. Glazed medieval jugs rarely show evidence of having been in contact with fire. Overall, the size of the sherds and the limited number of vessel represented indicates that there was medieval activity within the immediate vicinity of these excavations.

Conclusion

The evaluation has successfully confirmed that archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site. A single feature of archaeological interest was uncovered during the evaluation, this consisted of a large pit which contained pottery which dated it to the mid 14th century. Due to the same pottery types being observed in both this site and the Bricklayers Arms immediately to the south, it could suggest that the pit observed in this evaluation may be a continuation of the cluster of pits that were observed in the 2011 excavation. Due to the presence of this well-preserved medieval feature within this evaluation and the proximity to the Bricklayers Arms medieval site, number 31Church Lane is considered to have a high archaeological potential.

References

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at W, SE or SW end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	10.30	1.5	0.50-0.76	0–0.34m topsoil; 0.34-0.70m made ground; 0.70m + natural geology. Post medieval/modern pit [1] **[Plate 1]**
2	11.30	1.5	0.90	0-0.38m topsoil; 0.38-0.50m dark grey silty clay; 0.50-0.79m mid greenish grey silty clay; 0.79m+ natural geology.
3	10	1.5	0.88	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25m-0.42m dark grey sandy silt; 0.42-0.88m mid brownish grey sandy silt; 0.88m+ natural geology. Pits [2] and [3]. **[Plate 2]**

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	Cut	Fill (s)	Type	Date	Dating evidence
1	1	52	Pit	Modern	Pottery
3	2	53	Pit	Modern	Pottery
3	3	54, 55	Pit	Medieval 14th century	Pottery

APPENDIX 3*:* Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

		OXAC		OXBF		OXY		OXAM		OXDR		WHEW	
Tr	Cntxt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
1	52											2	16
2	53									1	26	5	24
3	54	2	46	36	806	3	28	20	631				
	Total	2	46	36	806	3	28	20	631	1	26	7	40

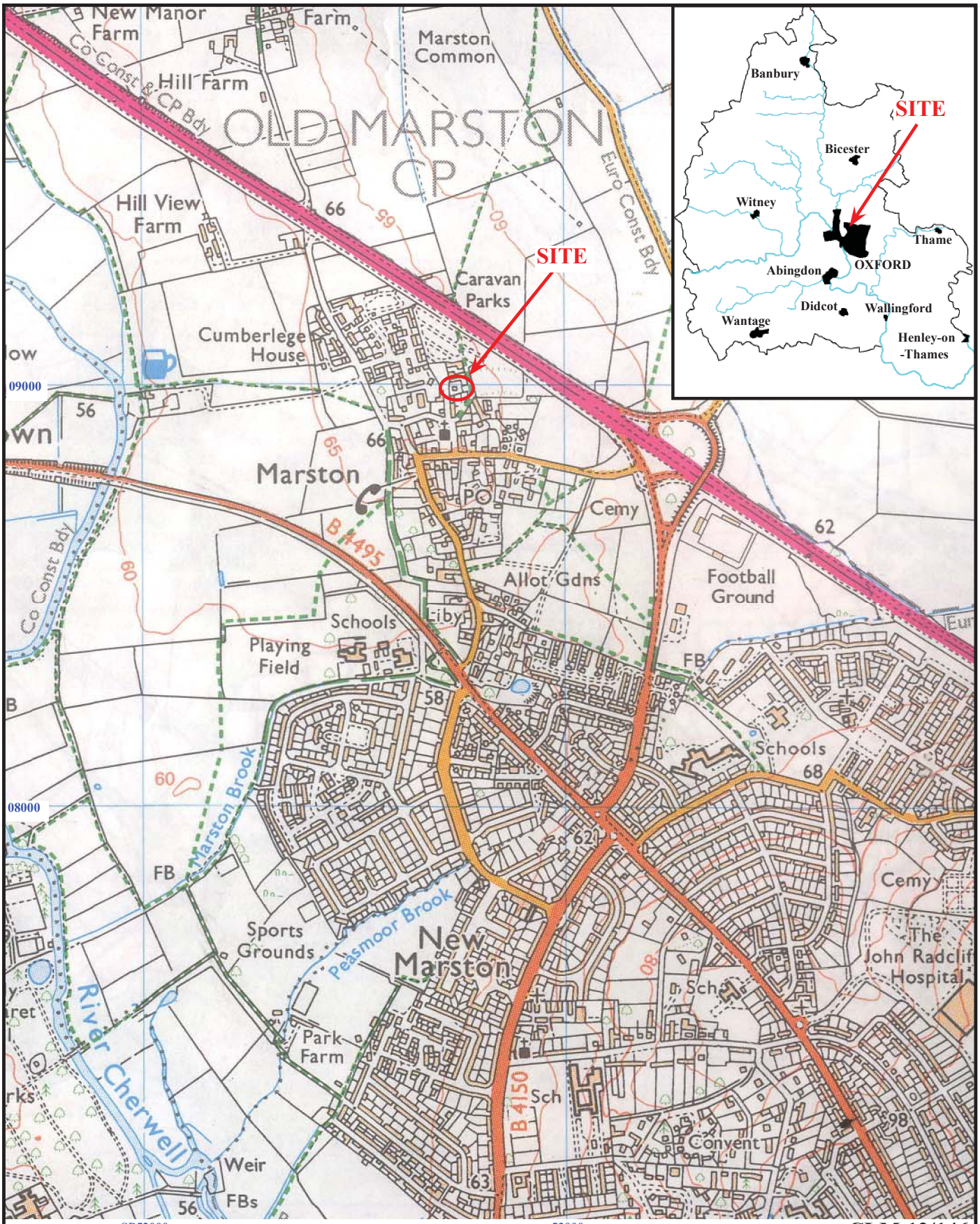

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Figure 1. Location of site within Marston, Oxford and Oxfordshire.

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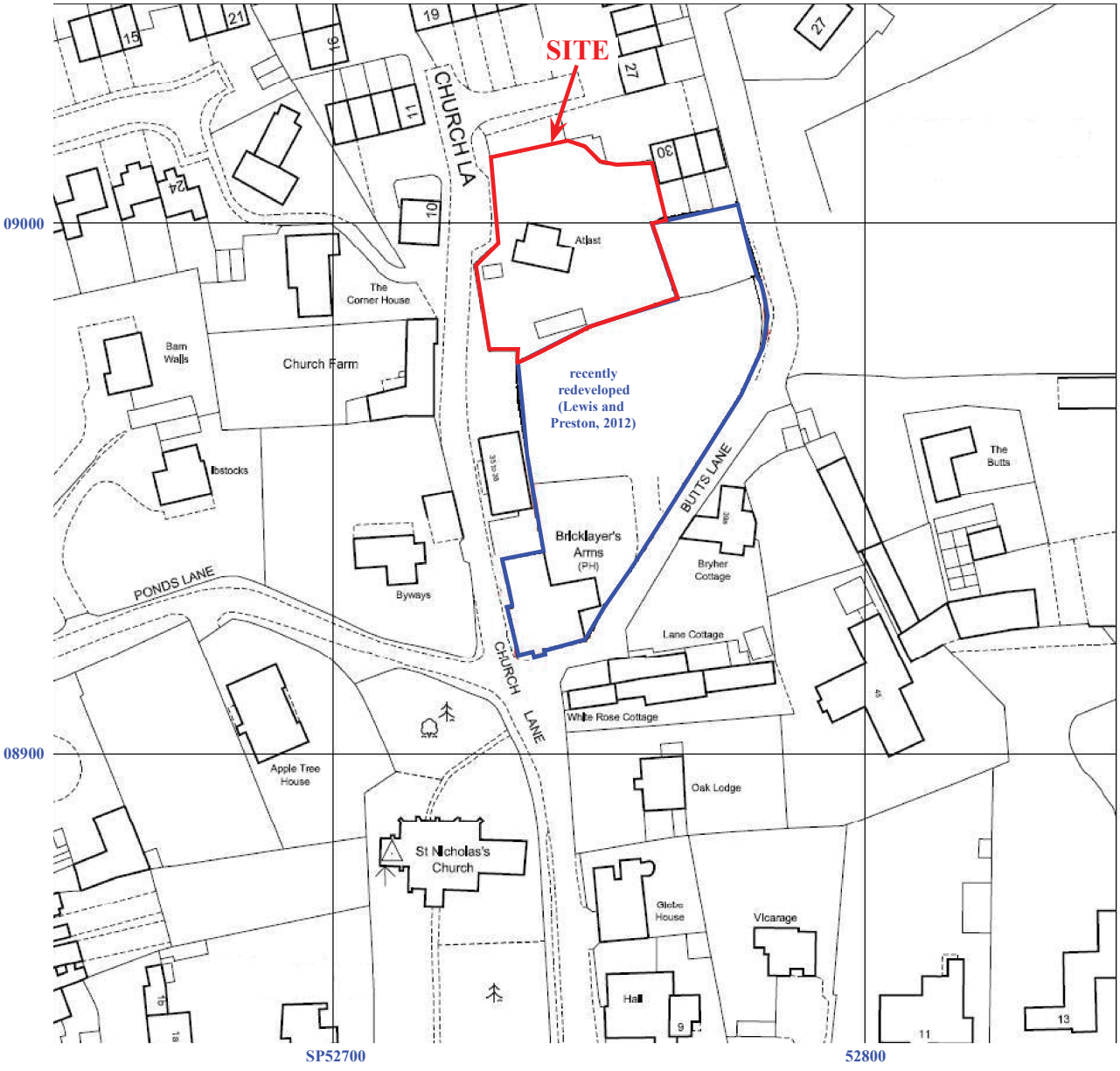

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Church Lane.

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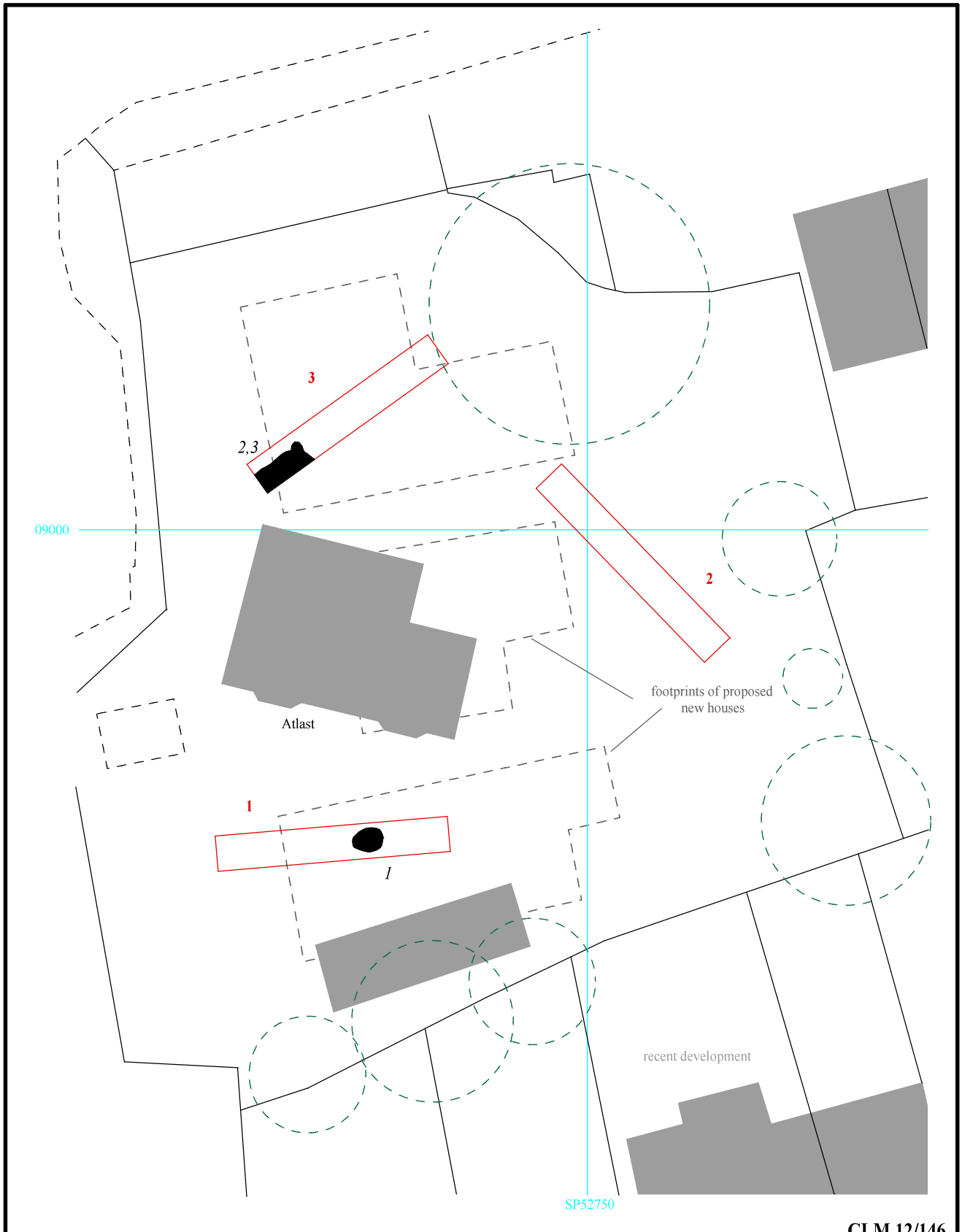

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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

0 20m

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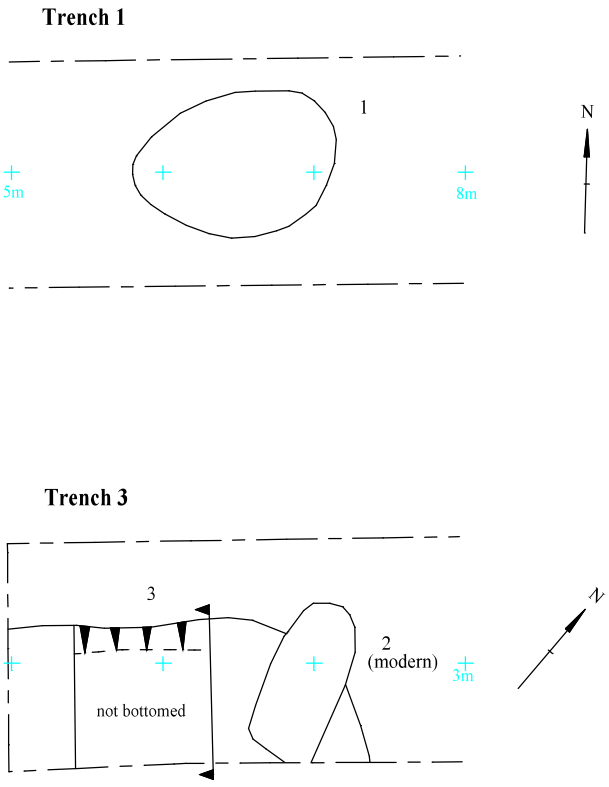

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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.

0 5m

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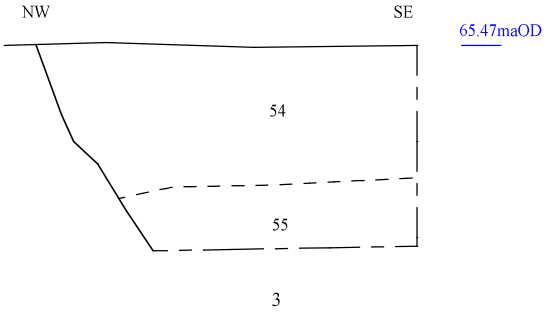

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Figure 5. Section.

0 1m

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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking east, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.3m.

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

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Plates 1 and 2.

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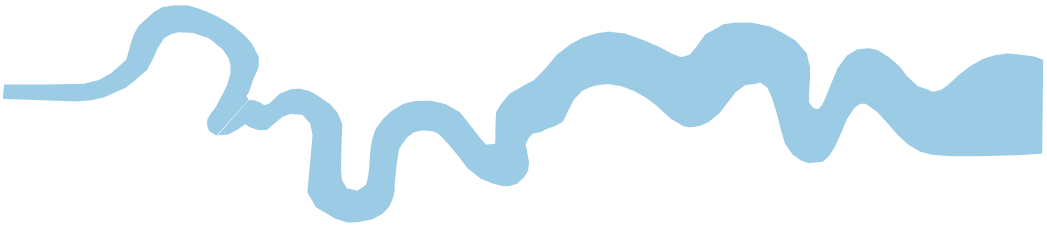
TIME CHART

	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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