

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Sunningdale School, Dry Arch Road,
Sunningdale, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Susan Porter

Site Code: SSD12/91

(SU 9465 6707)

Sunningdale School, Dry Arch Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Sunningdale School

by Susan Porter

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code SSD 12/91

October 2012

Summary

Site name: Sunningdale School, Dry Arch Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 9465 6707

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 3rd July – 17th October 2012

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Munding and Aiji Castle

Site code: SSD 12/91

Summary of results: During both tree removal and ground reduction for the plant room footings area no artefacts nor deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with an approved local museum willing to accept material in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 24.10.12 Steve Preston✓ 24.10.12

Sunningdale School, Dry Arch Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Susan Porter

Report 12/91

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Sunningdale School, Dry Arch Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire (SU 9465 6707) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Nick Jones of Wye Construction Services Ltd , Unit 5 Lyon Road, Hersham Industrial Estate, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, KT12 3PU on behalf of Sunningdale School.

Planning permission (app no 12/00991/FUL) has been gained from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the construction of a new building for a library and additional teaching space. The consent includes a condition relating to archaeology which requires that a watching brief be carried out during the groundworks.

The foundation design of the new structure and a need to match floor levels with the existing building meant there was minimal disturbance of the natural geology. The latter disturbance was limited to the digging of footings bases for a plant room and preliminary removal of mature tree roots.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the Royal Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by the Royal Borough as advised by Ms Fiona MacDonald of Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Royal Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Muddin and Aiji Castle between 3rd July and 17th October 2012 and the site code is SSD 12/91.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with an approved local museum willing to accept material in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on ground that slopes slightly to the north approximately 1km to the south-west of the village of Sunningdale (Fig. 1). At the northern extent of the site it is bounded by a railway embankment, with residential properties to the east and playing fields to the west (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is recorded as Bagshot Beds (BGS 1981) and a yellow sand was observed on site. The site lies at a height of c. 60m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The site lies just to the north of the projected line of the Roman road from Silchester to London (the Devil's Highway). Several large Roman sites are known to be preferentially located adjacent to the road, as at Wickham bushes (Ford 1987, 83) and other roadside sites can be anticipated. More specifically, an antiquarian reference (Hughes 1890) to the finding of a Roman mosaic floor and much brick and tile during the construction of the nearby railway suggests the presence of a wealthy Roman settlement in the vicinity though the precise location of these observations is not known. However, recent fieldwork to the east did not locate the Roman road along its projected line (Porter 2012a and b) and the exact course of the road locally is now uncertain. Evaluation trenching to the south-east of the site at Summerwood on the north side of Charters road revealed a shallow gully, possibly of Roman or later date, based on a small quantity of probably Roman brick (Wallis 2004) but a further watching brief on the site did not record any further archaeological deposits (Porter 2012c).

A medieval priory is recorded in the general area at Broomhall and several Bronze Age round barrows are present to the south.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to involve examination of all areas of intrusive groundwork, in particular any topsoil stripping prior to ground reduction, and the digging of foundation trenches and service runs as necessary. Archaeological deposits threatened by the groundworks were to be excavated and recorded, where plant was used to dig foundation and service trenches it was to be fitted with a toothless bucket. Tree roots were removed before the ground was stripped and later reduced in preparation for building work.

Results

Tree roots

Two large tree roots were removed from the site prior to the excavation of the library basement (Fig. 3). Both holes were typically 2m x 2m in extent (Pl. 2). At the south-west end of the site, tree removal in the area of the quad revealed a stratigraphy of 1.08m topsoil, overlying 0.07m grey brown sand subsoil, with the yellow sand natural geology visible at 1.15m (Pl. 2). To the north-east of the site the stratigraphy observed during tree root

removal comprised 0.30m topsoil, above 0.25m grey brown sand subsoil, overlying yellow sand natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed during removal of the tree roots.

The plant room footings

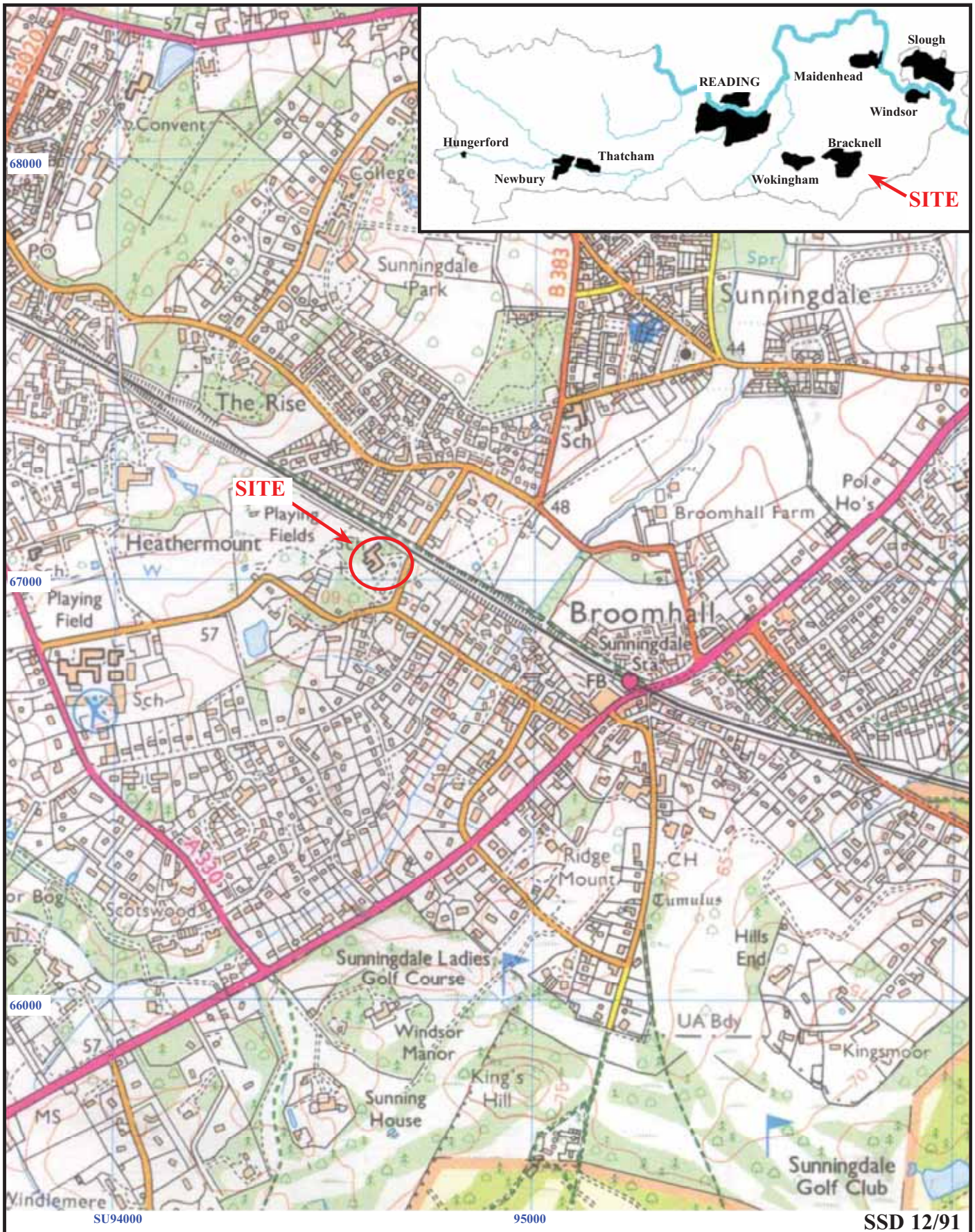
The plant room footings area was rectangular in shape, 6m in length, 4m in width and 2m in depth (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 1). The stratigraphy comprised 0.50m dark grey brown topsoil mixed with made ground of tile, brick and tree roots originally below Tarmac, which overlay 0.30m mid grey brown sand subsoil which in turn overlay light yellow sand natural geology (Fig. 4). A modern soakaway 1m wide existed in the south-west corner of the reduced area. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed within the area of the library basement.

Conclusion

Despite the anticipated archaeological potential of the area, the results of the watching brief showed that nothing of archaeological interest was revealed or disturbed by the development.

References

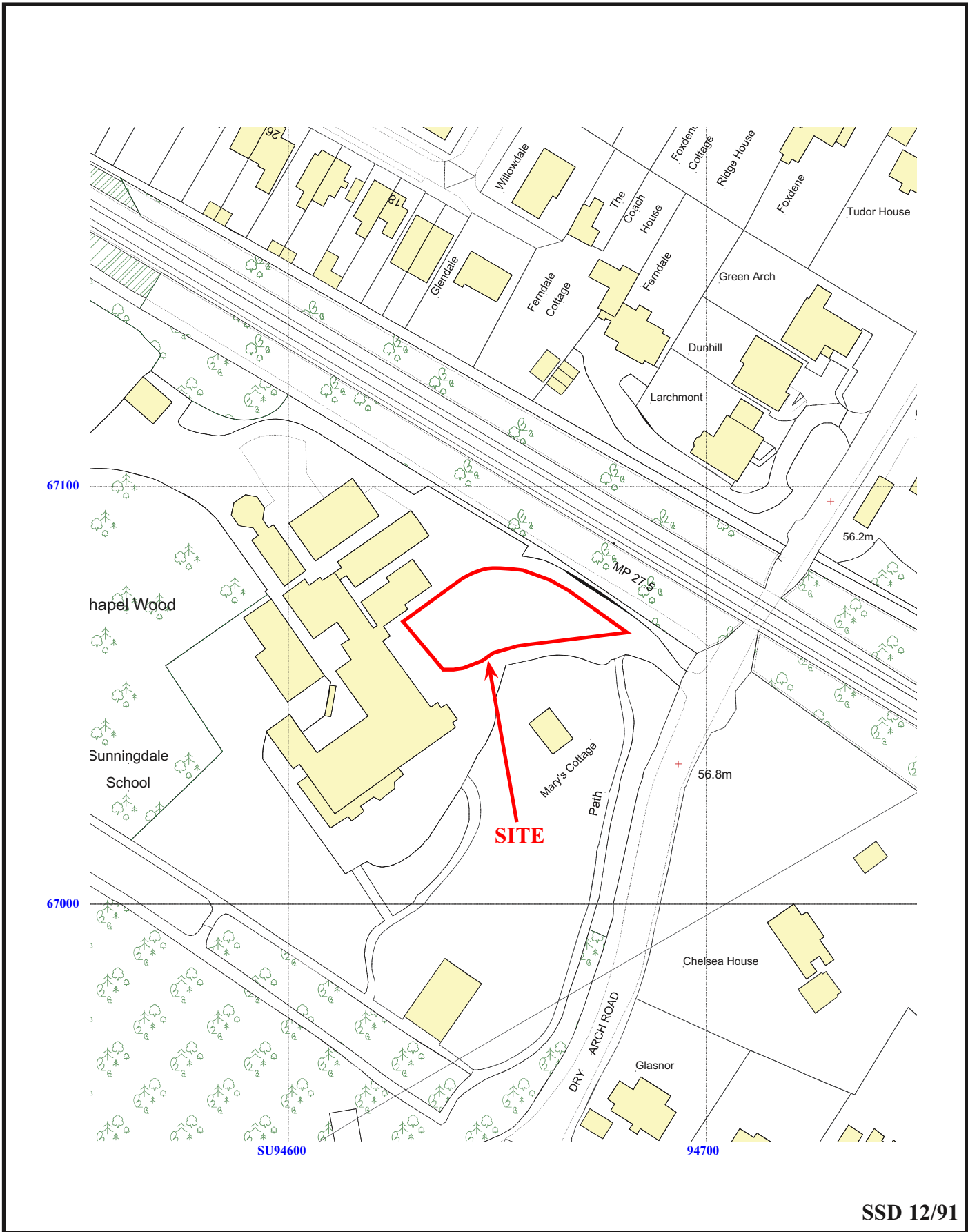
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 Figure 1. Location of site within Sunningdale and Berkshire.

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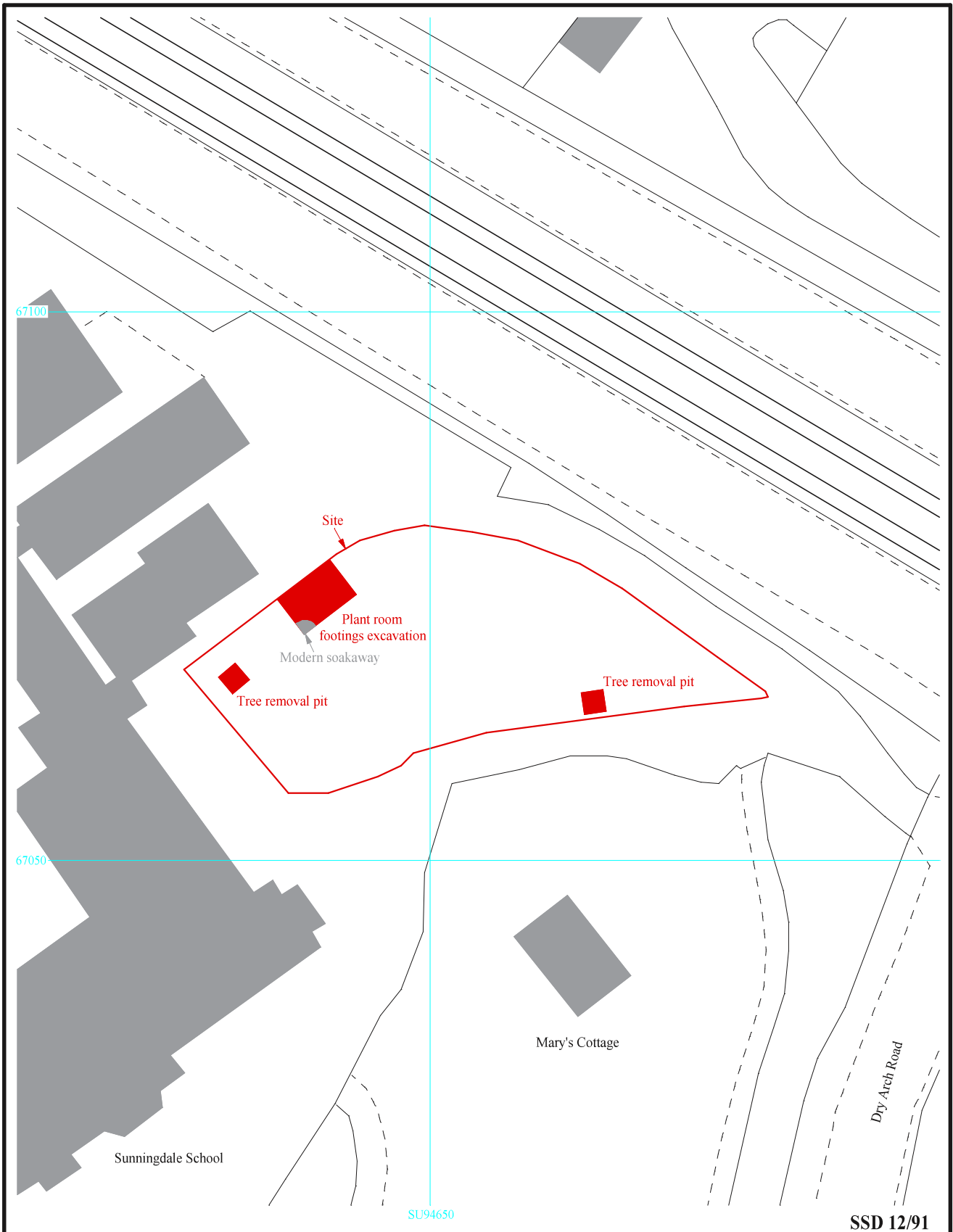
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Dry Arch Road.

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Figure 3. Locations of groundworks observed.



SE _____ NW [60.4m aOD](#)

Topsoil/made ground



Mid grey-brown sand



Light yellow sand (natural geology)



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Figure 4. Representative section.



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Plate 1. Plant room footings excavation, looking west, Scales: 2m and 0.5m.



Plate 2. Tree removal pit 2, looking west, Scales: 2m.

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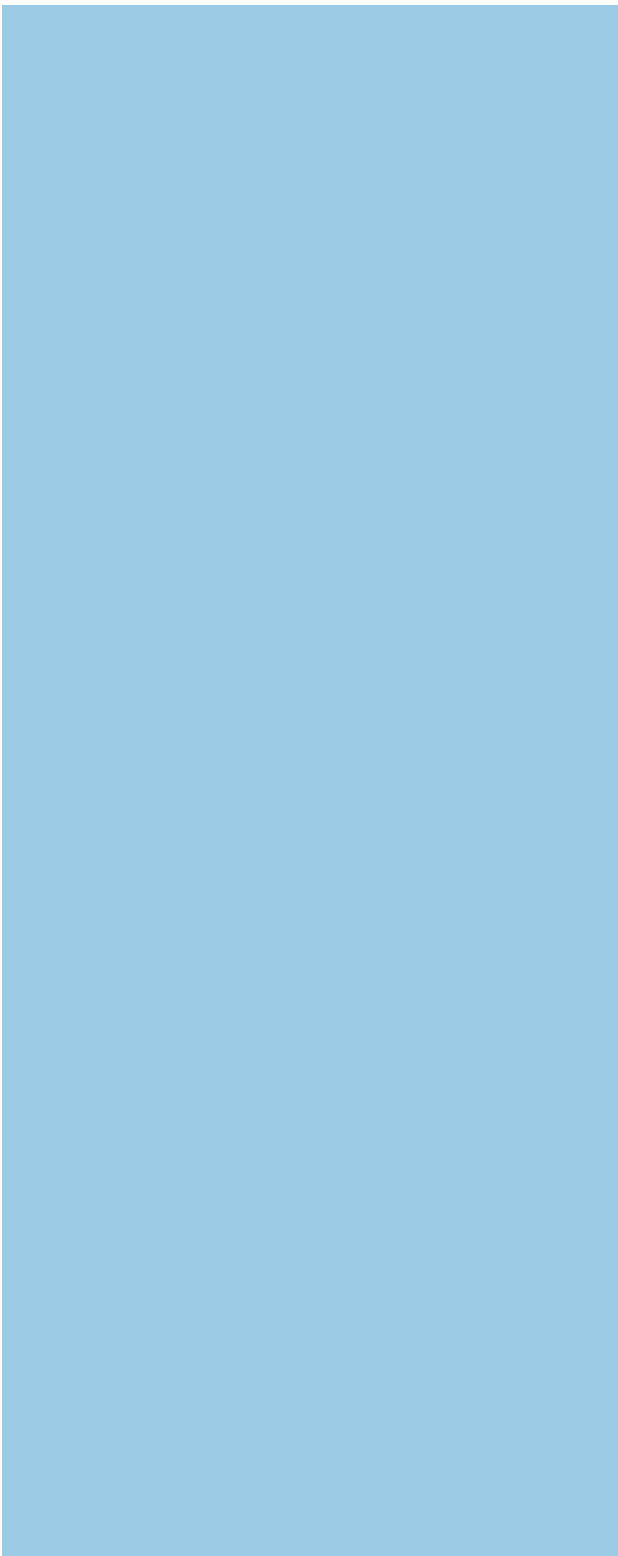
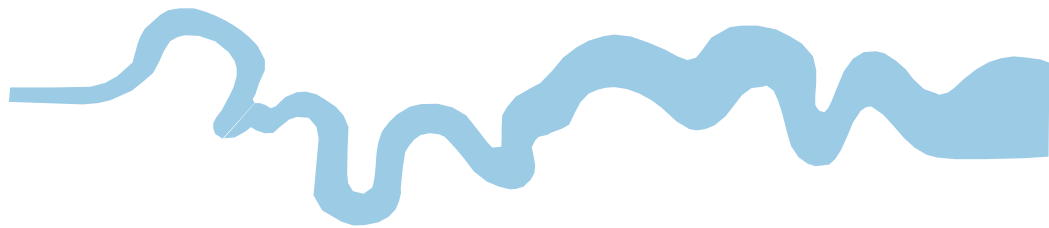
Plates 1 and 2.

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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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