

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Long Acre, 228 Greys Road, Henley-on-Thames,
Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andy Taylor

Site Code: GRH12/185

(SU 7443 8162)

**Long Acre, 228 Greys Road, Henley-on-Thames,
Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr J Shean

by Andy Taylor
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code GRH 12/185

March 2013

Summary

Site name: Long Acre, 228 Greys Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 7443 8162

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 14th November 2012-14th February 2013

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisors: Tim Dawson, Danielle Milbank, Andy Munding, Jacqueline Pitt and Andy Taylor

Site code: GRH12/185

Area of site: c.200 sq m

Summary of results: Examination of gravel deposits excavated prior to construction of a new basement revealed no deposits nor finds of archaeological interest.

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

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 11.03.13

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Report 12/185

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Long Acre, 228 Greys Road, Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire (SU 7443 8162) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Martin Butler, of Martin Butler Partnership Limited, 28 Broad Street, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1AB. on behalf of Mr. J Shean. Planning permission (P12/S1274/FUL) has been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a new house with basement.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the District's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist with Oxfordshire County Council, advisers to the District on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Dawson, Danielle Milbank, Andy Mundin, Jacqueline Pitt and Andy Taylor between 14th November 2012 and 14th February 2013 and the site code is GRH 12/185.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the northern side of Greys Road, which itself lies on the south western edge of Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire (Fig 2). It is located on a flat, rectangular plot of land on the site of a former property, now demolished. The underlying geology consisted of 5th Terrace gravel deposits (BGS 1980) which was observed across the site and it lies at a height of c.85m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential for the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project provided by Mr Richard Oram of Oxfordshire County Council (Oram 2012). In summary, according to the British Geological Survey the site lies on a geological outcrop (now the Black Park gravel) which comprises gravel deposits from a former channel of the Thames. Some half a million years ago the River Thames flowed north-east past St Albans to

Clacton before joining the River Rhine somewhere beneath the present North Sea. From the effects of glaciation, river downcutting and land uplift in subsequent times the course of the Thames has been deflected southwards to its present course, leaving relict gravel terraces in its wake. Examination of a 19th and early 20th Century gravel workings in the area recovered numerous flint tools of lower Palaeolithic date representing some of the earliest ancestral human (hominin) presence in the British Isles, with Highlands Farm located c.330m to the south west being especially prolific (Wymer 1968, Morigi et al 2011). However, recent evaluation just to the north did not reveal any finds or deposits of archaeological interest (Dawson 2012).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This would observe areas of overburden removal, ground reduction, geo-technical investigations and foundation trenching.

Results

Geotechnical test pits

Four geological test pits were dug and archaeologically monitored (Fig 3). Test pits 1 and 2 were located north-east; test pit 3 to the north-west; and test pit 4 to the south-west of the existing building.

Pit 1:

This test pit measured 2.40m in length by 0.75m wide and was excavated to a depth of 3.10m. The stratigraphy comprised 0.22m of topsoil above 0.34m of mid grey-brown sandy silt subsoil. This overlay terrace gravels, 0.22m light yellow-grey sandy gravel, 0.82m mid red-brown sandy gravel and 0.90m light grey-brown gravelly sand, sealing natural chalk. No archaeological artefacts were recovered.

Pit 2:

This test pit measured 2.50m in length by 0.75m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 3.56m (Pl. 1). The stratigraphy indicated slumping from the north-east to the south-west and comprised 0.08m of topsoil above 0.12m of mid grey-brown clayey silt subsoil. This overlay terrace gravels of 0.74m light red-grey clayey gravel, 1.42m mid red-brown sandy gravel and 1.20m mid red-brown sandy gravel. Natural chalk was observed in the south-west end only suggesting that the gravel to the north might be infilling a palaeochannel. No archaeological artefacts were recovered.

Pit 3:

This test pit measured 2.75m in length by 0.75m wide and was excavated to a depth of 2.40m. The stratigraphy comprised 0.10m of topsoil above 0.20m of mid grey-brown sandy silt subsoil. This overlay terrace gravels, 0.50m mid yellow-brown sandy gravel, and 1.44m mid red-brown sandy gravel, sealing natural chalk. No archaeological artefacts were recovered.

Pit 4:

This test pit measured 2.80m in length by 0.75m wide and was excavated to a depth of 1.63m. The stratigraphy comprised 0.10m of topsoil above 0.17m of light grey-brown sandy silt subsoil. This overlay terrace gravels, 0.33m mid yellow-brown clayey gravel, 0.12m mid yellow-brown sandy gravel and 0.91m mid red-brown sandy gravel. Chalk was not exposed. No archaeological artefacts were recovered.

The new house footprint

The footprint of the new house was initially monitored when 0.20m of demolition debris and mixed topsoil/subsoil overburden was removed to search for post-glacial archaeological deposits. No such deposits were observed.

The second component of the watching brief was the observation of the digging and examination of arisings during ground reduction for the new basement. This took place down to a depth of c.4m in the central portion of the basement but only 3m deep around the margins. This ground reduction took place in up to 3 spits (Pl. 2). Typically c. 2.5-3m of gravel was revealed above the chalk with a very cryoturbated interface (Pl. 3). Within the gravel (much of which was poorly sorted indicating the presence of fast flowing water) occasional sandy layers were visible, which may indicate the presence of slower moving portions of river or even dry land and which may have allowed for the possibility of human occupation deposits to be preserved. However, despite examination, no such traces were revealed. Neither were any Palaeolithic finds observed from within the gravel matrix.

Finds

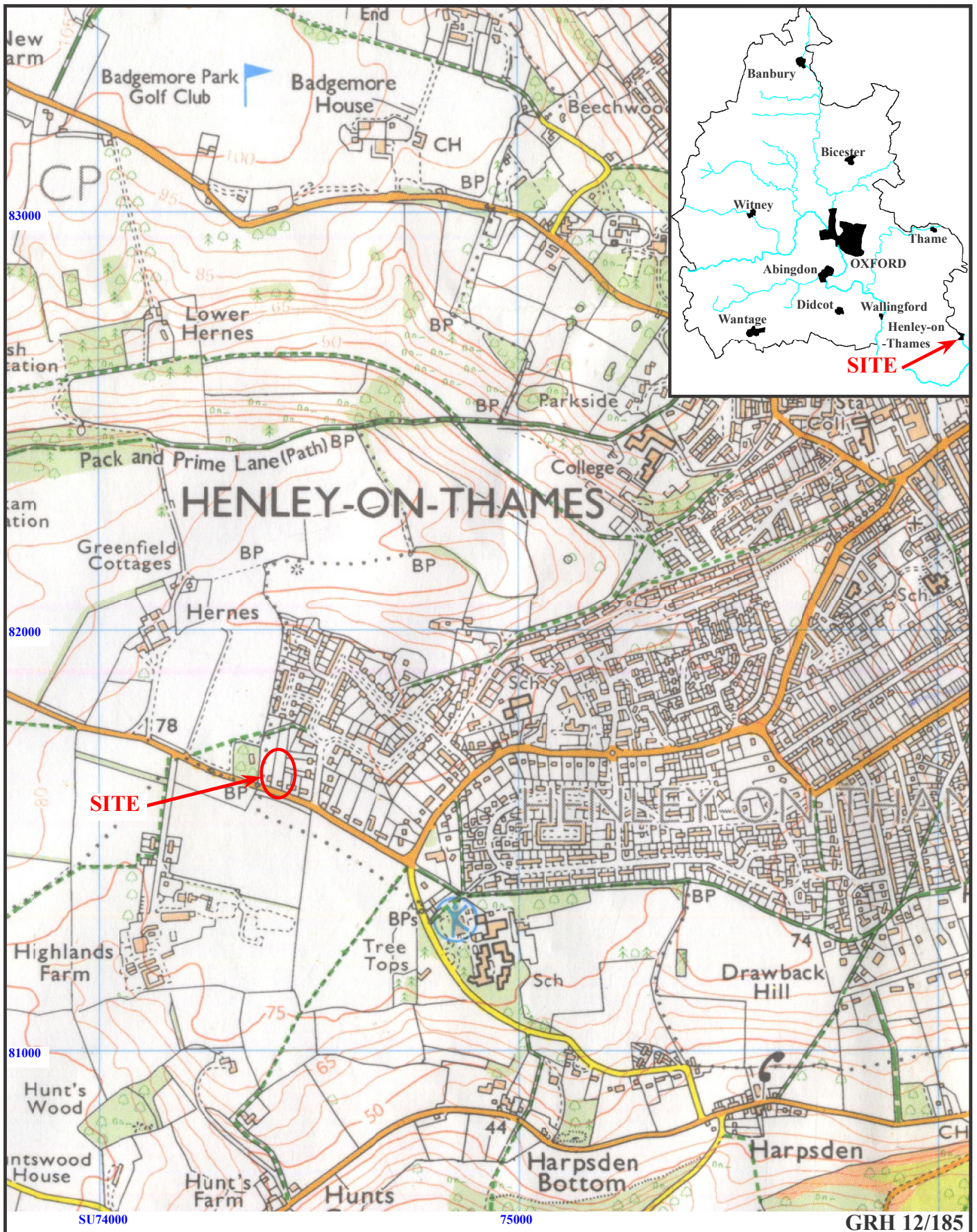
No finds of an archaeological nature were recovered during the watching brief.

Conclusion

The watching brief took place during the digging of both the geotechnical test pits and the bulk excavation for the basement. Despite the presence of sand lenses within the gravel no finds nor deposits of archaeological interest were observed though sand lenses seen did have the potential for occupation. Test pit 2 to the north showed a possible deepening of the gravel northwards, perhaps indicating the presence of a palaeochannel. However, despite the site's potential for Palaeolithic activity none was observed.

References

- BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 254, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Dawson, T, 2012, Land to the north of Windyridge, Elizabeth Road, Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire, Thames Valley Archaeological Services report WHO 12/110
- Morigi, A, Schreve, D and White, M, 2011, 'Introduction and the pre-Anglian geological, palaeoenvironmental and archaeological records', in A Morigi, D Schreve, M White, G Hey, M Robinson, A Barclay and P Bradley, *The Thames Through Time: The Archaeology of the Gravel Terraces of the Upper and Middle Thames: Early Prehistory to 1500BC*, Oxford Archaeol Thames Valley Landscapes Monogr 32, Oxford, 1–40
- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Oram, R, 2012, 228 Greys Road, Henley on Thames, Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford
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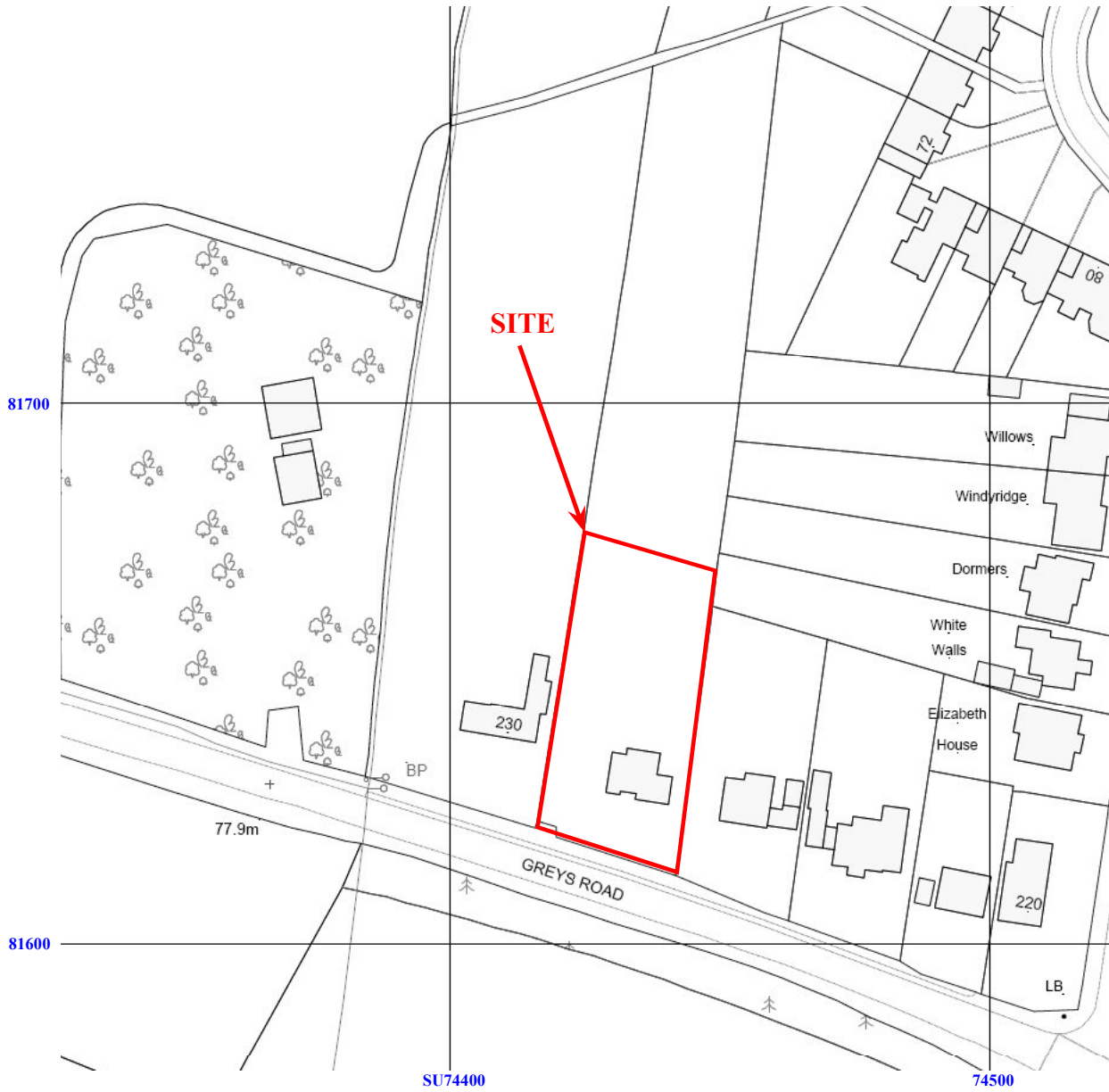
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Figure 1. Location of site within Henley and Oxfordshire.

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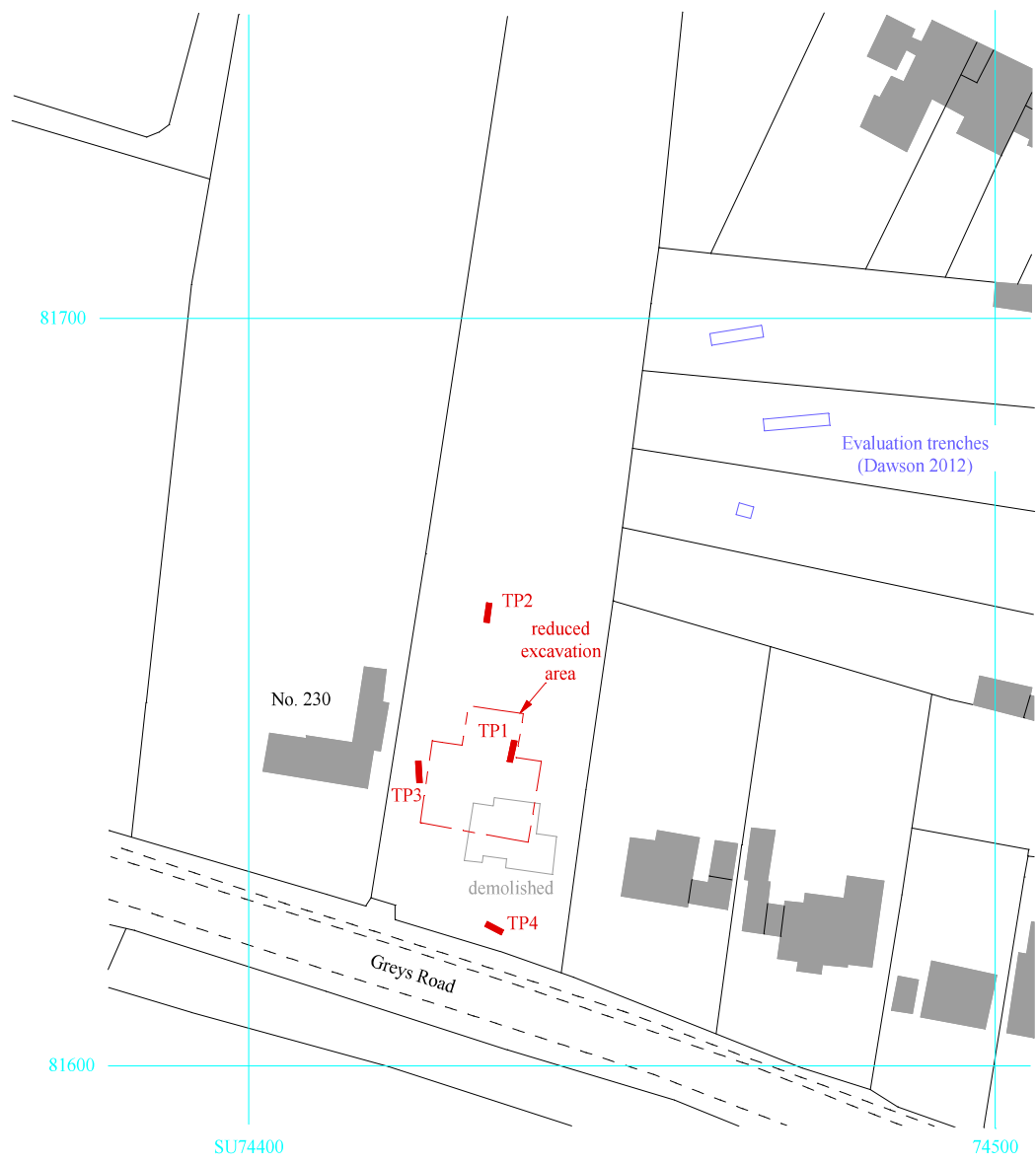
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site, showing building prior to
recent demolition.

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Figure 3. Location of observed areas and pre-demolition test pits.





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



Plate 2. Upper sequence of basement section looking north, Scale: 1m.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. General view of site looking north.



Plate 4. General view of site looking west.

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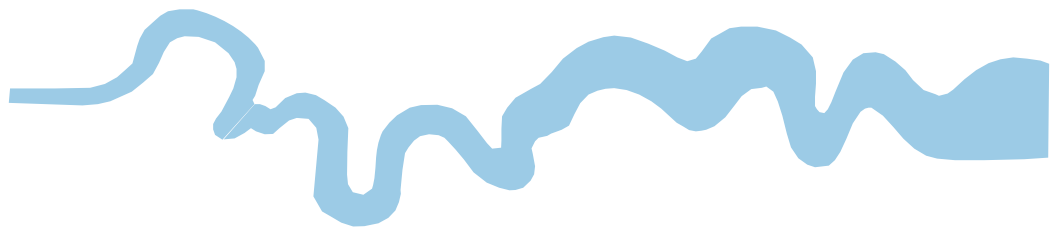
Plates 3 and 4.

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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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