

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Beechwood Cottage, Harpsden Wood,
Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andy Mundin

Site Code: BCH12/72

(SU 7575 8035)

Beechwood Cottage, Harpsden Wood Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr. Robin Andrews

by Andrew Muddin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BCH 12/72

March 2013

Summary

Site name: Beechwood Cottage, Harpsden Wood, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 7575 8035

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 1st November 2012 to 7th March 2013

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Mundin

Site code: BCH 12/72

Area of site: 0.23ha

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits were discovered within the observed works.

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.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 22.03.13 Steve Preston ✓ 18.03.13

Beechwood Cottage, Harpsden Wood, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Report 12/72

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Beechwood Cottage, Harpsden Wood, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire (SU 7575 8035) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Patrick Haran, of the Day Tanner Partnership, 51 Peach Street, Wokingham, RG40 1XP on behalf of Mr. Robin Andrews.

Planning permission (P08/E1213) has been granted by South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a new house and detached garage to replace the existing dwelling. A condition has been attached to this permission requiring a watching brief during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist at Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service and based brief prepared by him (Oram 2012). The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Muddin between 1st November 2012 to 7th March 2013 and the site code is BCH 12/72.

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

The site is located on the western side of Harpsden Wood, approximately 2km south of Henley-on-Thames. A small road leads to the Cottage off Woodlands Road which leads to the village of Harpsden situated to the north-east (Fig. 2). The ground at the site itself is basically flat, at a height of 83m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), on a small plateau from which the surrounding land falls away steeply to north and east. The underlying geology is glacial clay with flint close to redeposited plateau gravel situated in a hollow within the chalk (BGS 1946).

Archaeological background

The site's archaeological potential has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Oram 2012). A Roman villa is recorded in the Historic Environment Record (HER)

situated to the north-west. This was excavated in the early 20th century and a bathhouse was recorded. A range of buildings to the north were located in a 1951 excavation (Henig and Booth 2000). An additional deposit of a small group of Iron Age gold coins is also recorded nearby. A modest collection of pottery, coins, roof tile and metalwork has been recovered from this villa site. It is usual that villa buildings do not exist in isolation, most usually being with associated field systems forming an estate covering large parts of the landscape.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any deposits affected by the groundworks. This would include watching removal of the previous foundations. If large areas of ground were found not to be disturbed, or archaeological deposits exist, new footing trenching would also be observed. Observation of service runs, or other drainage would only be necessary if excavation occurred in previously undisturbed parts of the site or areas that uncovered natural horizons during primary phased ground reduction.

Results

The groundworks comprised two stages of observations:

Foundation removal

The previous building had been demolished prior to observation commencing. The site overburden has a homogenous mix of brown clay and rubble over the location of the previous dwelling, with only a small portion of the site containing a pile of rubble. Once observation of the foundation grubbing out commenced, it was noted that a truncated natural horizon existed in the previous building's location. The foundation extended to a depth of 0.52m, with natural geology exposed to the base of excavation at a depth of 0.97m (Figs 3 and 4; Pl. 2).

Ground reduction and footings

The excavation for the reduced level over the footprint of the new development was also observed (Fig. 3 and Pl. 1). This area was c. 22m by 25m. This uncovered natural geology from a depth of 0.55m with the maximum depth of excavation into the gradual slope of the garden to the north, to a maximum depth at the northern section of 0.8m. An area of 20th-century truncation (Fig.3) was noted on the western edge of the strip, which contained modern glass and porcelain. No archaeologically relevant deposits were noted to survive above the natural.

Finds

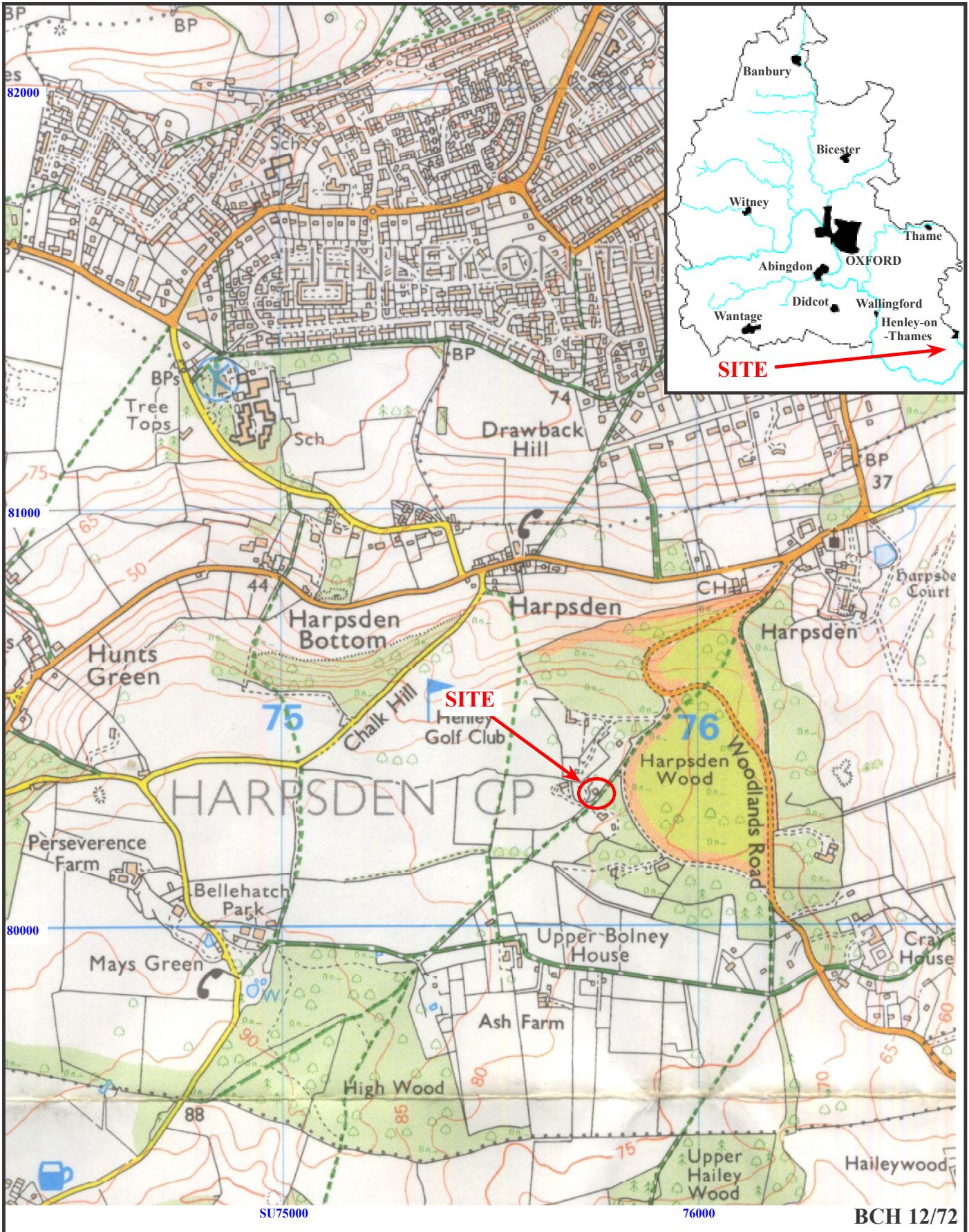
Only one item of note was recovered from the selection of material seen in the site overburden; the base of a earthenware beer bottle, 650mm in diameter at its base. This had been marked with the image of a bee and was labelled from 'The Brewery, Henley-on-Thames'. This would mean it was produced by the local Brakspear brewery. This was retained on site along with other 20th-century material.

Conclusion

No archaeological deposits were observed and it was noted that the site has no been extensively disturbed from the early 20th-century construction of the previous cottage building.

References

- BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
Henig, M and Booth, P, 2000, *Roman Oxfordshire*, Stroud
NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
Oram, R, 'Beechwood Cottage, Harpsden Woods, Harpsden: design brief for archaeological watching brief',
Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, Oxford

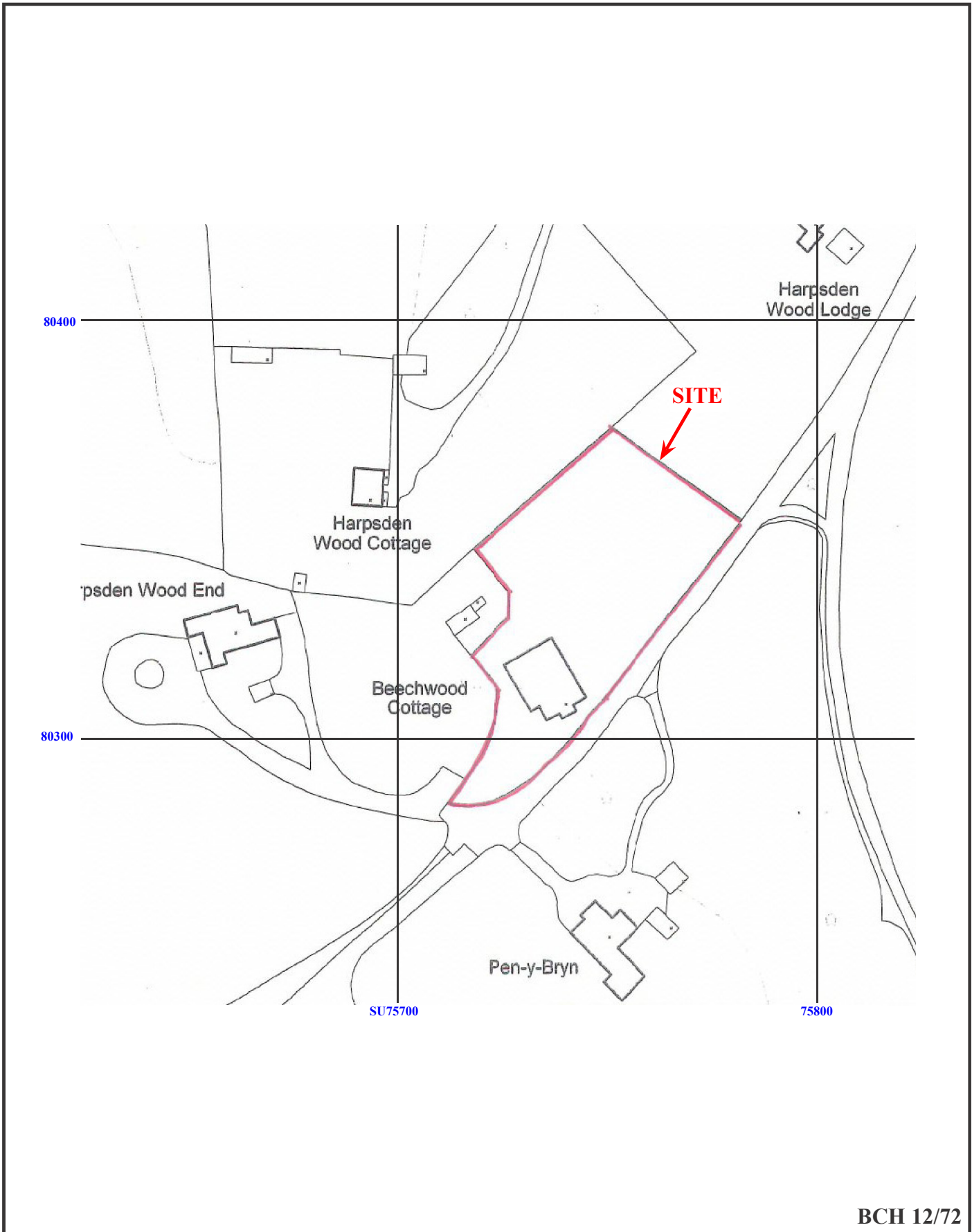


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Figure 1. Location of site within Harpsden and Oxfordshire.

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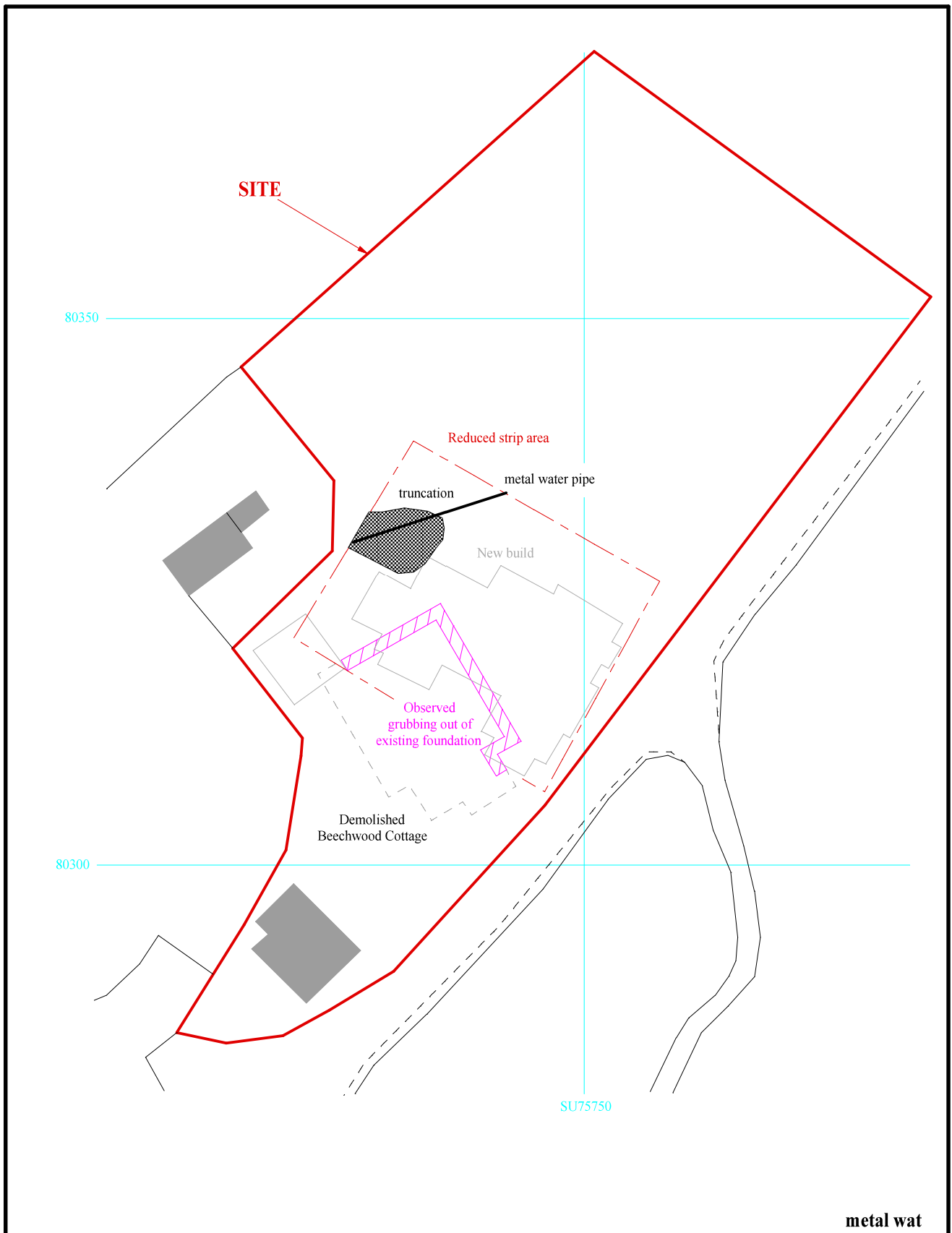


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site, prior to demolition.

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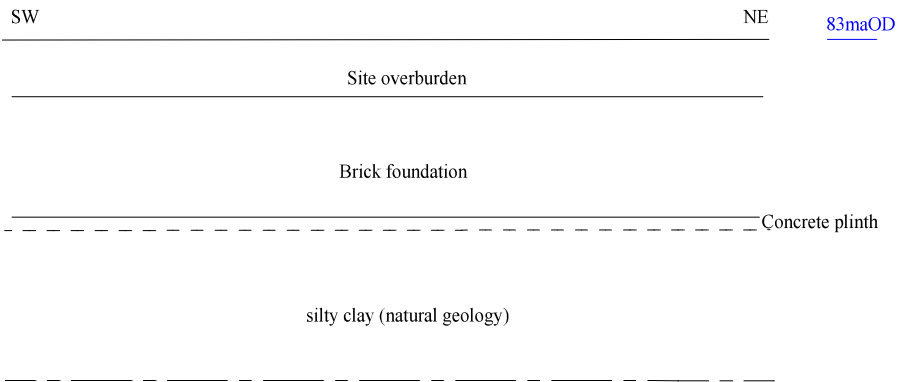
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Figure 3. Location of observed area.





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Figure 4. Representative section



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Plate 1. Northern edge of area of ground reduction, looking east.



Plate 2. Excavation by side of existing foundation before removal, looking north west, Scales: 1m.

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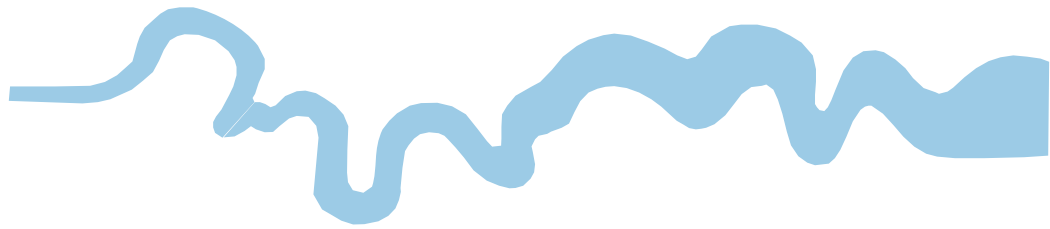
Plates 1 and 2.

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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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